

BORN OF REVOLUTION

**A Misconceived
Liturgical Movement**

Volume 1



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“Active Participation”

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Cover image: *Lumen Christi*, the pre-1956 Easter Vigil Procession
with triple-branched candlestick, by stained-glass artist
Margaret Agnes Rope 1923

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PREFACE

The expression *Novus Ordo*, used throughout this study, stands in need of some preliminary explanation. It is short for *Novus Ordo Missae* (the new Order of Mass) which was issued by Pope Paul VI in 1969 to replace the traditional Mass of the Roman Rite that had a pedigree of approximately 1,600 years. The term was first used in the *Short Critical Study of the New Order of Mass* and its covering letter sent by Cardinals Ottaviani and Bacci to Paul VI in 1969. In it, the Cardinals

demonstrated, with clear and convincing arguments, that “the *Novus Ordo* represents, both as a whole and in its details, a striking departure from the Catholic theology of the Mass as it was formulated in Session XXII of the Council of Trent”. But their work, known only among traditionalists today, was buried in silence by the Liturgical Establishment – a true *damnatio memoriae* in the historic sense of a purging from public memory by exclusion from official accounts.

So successful has been the rewriting of history, that there are many Catholics today who have not the slightest inkling that there ever existed a traditional rite of Mass, and can therefore have no idea what the term *Novus Ordo* even means. For them, no “old rite/new rite” dichotomy exists at all, or any awareness of how radically different the new is from the old. As far as they are concerned, what they now experience in their Sunday liturgies is all there is and all there has ever been. That is because they have been purposely kept in the dark about what happened to the Mass in 1969. And now there is hardly anyone among the hierarchy willing to tell them what it is they are not being allowed to know.

What this reveals is that as the generations of *Novus Ordo* Catholics roll on, a profound forgetfulness, even of their own recent history, has set in. In other words, they no longer know the origins of the trendy *Novus Ordo* reforms which shocked and alienated large numbers of their parents and grandparents back in the day.

To illustrate this ignorance and the great chasm that has opened up between traditionalist and *Novus Ordo* Catholics as a result of these reforms, a brief mention should suffice of a recent incident in a *Novus Ordo* church where a traditional Latin Mass had taken place. As soon as it was over, a man stood up and in a loud voice proclaimed: “That was very strange”. Will ironies never cease? It evidently did not strike him as exceedingly strange that he himself was unable to recognize the same rite of Mass that had been familiar for centuries to Popes, Saints and countless members of the faithful throughout the world.

INTRODUCTION

Waves of destruction

omewhere, under the ocean, an earthquake occurs and launches a wave. The crest of the wave is not very high, only about 1 metre. So if you were in a passing ship, you would not notice any difference or be aware of what was happening underneath. Here, a moving wall of water stretching from the surface to the sea bed is moving forward. But as the wave can be hundreds of miles long and can travel at hundreds of miles per hour, it carries a phenomenal amount of pent-up energy, proceeding all the while in complete quiet and seeming repose. Still, it seems quite innocuous to the unwary. Only when the wave reaches the coastline does it rise up in a great wall of crashing water. Only then is its full destructive potential released.

Lest the reader fear that he has picked up the wrong book and that this is a treatise on oceanography, it should quickly be explained that an analogy can be drawn between the precursory signs of an impending tsunami and the apparently “quiescent” pontificate of Pius XII.

Now, at a suitable distance in time, we can look back and see that virtually all Catholics who lived through this period could never have conceived that a liturgical tsunami was heading for the shores of the Church. That is because its course was being plotted by the Commission for the General Reform of the Liturgy established in 1946. Its members, appointed by Pope Pius XII in 1948, conducted their business in the utmost secrecy, so that when the Congregation of Rites revealed the full extent of the Holy Week Reforms in 1955, the faithful were taken by surprise. In other words, few people in the 1950s and early 60s knew what was coming until it was too late and they found themselves defenceless, caught as it were between the Devil and the deep blue sea, while the tide of innovations swept onwards unchecked.

It is a fact of physics that the deeper the water, the faster the waves travel; and, by analogy, these were very deep waters indeed. There has never been a deeper, faster reform in the history of the liturgy than that brought about in the 13 years between 1956 and 1969, the year when the rapidly advancing wave burst with full force on the unsuspecting faithful with the imposition of the New Mass.

How has it been so easy for the reformers to mount such an assault on the way Catholics have been worshipping for centuries? The triumph of the Liturgical Revolution they brought about was, like the progress of a

tsunami, preceded by a relatively “quiet” period when little or no danger was perceived to the established order.

We have to go back to the early part of the 20th century to see that the first stirrings of revolt against the traditional liturgy took place in Benedictine monasteries – the Abbeys of Mont César in Belgium, Maria Laach in Germany and St John’s Abbey in Minnesota. In these relatively secluded places, safe from prying eyes, experimentation was conducted in “active participation” of the laity in the liturgy. This involved “Dialogue Mass”, Mass facing the people, vernacular responses, congregational singing, an Offertory procession etc. in the 1920s and earlier.

The early Liturgical Movement was localized and sporadic and remained underground until after the Second World War when individual malcontents began to coalesce into groups around newly formed Study Weeks, Bishops’ Conferences, liturgical Centres, national and international Congresses and publishing houses, all with specific agendas for change. By the mid-1950s, the progressive current was running fast and strong.

What went unnoticed by most of the world’s Catholics was the cumulative propelling force building up behind the cresting wave. This packed enough energy to wipe out cherished traditions in a matter of moments and topple bastions which had stood for centuries. From this we can deduce that the seismic force of the onslaught was proportionate to the strength of passion felt by the reformers against the traditional liturgy.

Yet in the early stages of the Liturgical Revolution Popes Pius XII and John XXIII adopted, in varying degrees, a conciliatory approach to most of the demands of liturgical reformers, and even conferred on some of them positions of great power and influence. Their appeasement turned into a standing threat to established traditions, leaving the sheep of the flock increasingly unprotected against the wolves.

What this suggests is a Machiavellian concept of government by popes who alone had supreme authority over the liturgy and could have saved Tradition, yet seemed oblivious to the distinction between power and principle. Ample documentary evidence exists, and is provided throughout the course of this study, to prove that the liturgical reforms they authorized were broadly based on behind-the-scenes collusion, deceit and manipulation – a fact that must necessarily cast serious doubt on the legitimacy of the legislation by which their policies were enacted. This becomes more obvious when we consider that the effect of these policies was to deprive

the faithful of their full spiritual patrimony to the detriment of the Church. We can conclude that, with reference to the Roman Missal, it was Popes Pius XII and John XXIII – and not, as is commonly assumed, Paul VI – who introduced the faithful to their first experience of revolution.

The question as to what caused the tectonic plates to shift in the first place, or what could have triggered so convulsive and baneful a transformation of the ancient liturgy, has never been asked with any seriousness. Yet the answer, “active participation” of the laity, was already known by the progressivists from the time it was first used by Dom Lambert Beauduin in 1909 to inaugurate the Liturgical Movement. *They*, if no one else at the time, could see its destructive potential to “Protestantize” the liturgy by reconfiguring the role of the priest as simply another actor in the collective celebration of the Mass.

The traditional arrangement whereby the priest “said” the Mass and the people “heard” it was considered exploitative, designed to deny the faithful their “right” to have an active role in the Mass, and to keep them in a subordinate position to the priest. It may have started with the collective vocal responses of the laity (the so-called “Dialogue Mass”), but that was only a prototype of the complete revolution to come in which the role of the priest is downgraded, and would eventually be absorbed into the general “active participation” of the assembly.

After so much moving and shaking in the liturgy, most modern Catholics today actually believe – because they have had it drummed into them by their *Novus Ordo* priests – that the Mass would have no meaning without their vocal responses and other activity-based performances in it. The new Cartesian principle is *Dialogo ergo sum* whereby “Dialogue” is the updated form of the *cogito* that proves the *sum*: I dialogue therefore I am (a *Novus Ordo* Catholic).

What may come across as an ontological joke was meant in deadly earnest. It is precisely the ontological status of the ordained priest which allows him to perform supernatural actions in the Mass and Sacraments that has been impugned by progressive reformers who set out to blur the distinction between the clerical and lay states. They achieved their goal principally through the imposition of “active participation” of everyone in the liturgy.

But the true identity of the Catholic priest, indelible and everlasting, is upheld integrally in the traditional liturgy, even if the pull of contemporary

tides tries to make it appear otherwise.

It is now considered acceptable to denounce those who wish to preserve the traditional liturgy as extremist, fanatical and even schismatic. But there is nothing remotely extremist about attempting to preserve our common spiritual patrimony from annihilation, or schismatic about wanting the Church to preserve its own traditions. These were, after all, traditional aspirations upheld by the Church from its foundation to the onset of the Liturgical Revolution. It was only then that Church leaders, including popes, stopped defending Tradition and started punishing those who tried to uphold it, while taking the side of dissident liturgists against them.

A revolution such as that witnessed by mid-20th century Catholics can only be truly understood and remembered in the context of the traditions that it destroyed. All the evidence indicates that the creation of the New Mass of 1969 was dependent on a long concatenation of prior events that had been unfolding in historical continuity from the early years of the 20th century. We can call this the gestation period of the mutant *Novus Ordo* liturgy which was born of the Revolution. It is these “prior events”, many of which are still within living memory of the older generation of today’s Catholics, that will form the subject matter of this study.

1. “ACTIVE PARTICIPATION”: THE BACKGROUND

We will begin this study with the theme of “active participation”. As a catch-phrase, it rose to prominence in the Church within the Liturgical Movement in the 20th century. As “activity” had never been a defining characteristic of lay participation at Mass throughout the Church’s history, some explanation is needed as to why it suddenly acquired iconic status in the middle of the 20th century and how it came to have a far-reaching effect in the Church.

The “butterfly effect”

We do not need to believe in the famous adage that a butterfly can flap its wings in Brazil and set off a tornado in Texas to be convinced of the power of the single word “active” to produce a similar result in the Church. Although some progressive reformers had been implementing lay “active participation” in the liturgy from 1909, it was only when Vatican II’s Liturgy Constitution (1963) promoted it as the primary goal of the liturgy (“the aim to be achieved before all else”) ¹ that this hitherto relatively unknown quantity ricocheted around the world.

Even before the invention of the internet, within a short time it achieved viral status. The expression was on the lips of all liturgical reformers throughout the Church, soon becoming etched into the collective imagination as the defining characteristic of the reform. The infatuation with “active participation” proved itself to be boundless. No aspect of the liturgy was immune to its influence, for all the reforms, including those of Pope Pius XII in the 1950s, were specifically devised with the “active participation” of the faithful in mind. One could say that the liturgical reform has “active participation” running through it like the letters in a stick of rock. ²

In treating the main points of this new principle which revolutionized the whole of liturgical life, we will be addressing the following questions:

- Where did the expression come from?

- What was its precise meaning?
- Was it really necessary?
- What effects did it produce?

A phrase of dubious provenance

Ever since the early years of the 20th century, “active participation” has taken on a life of its own and continues to be reinforced with a zeal surpassed only by the hostility of the reformers to the traditional liturgy. Yet no one seems to have ever raised the question as to who actually coined the corresponding Latin phrase “*participatio actuosa*” and invested it with meaning. It says something about the standards of reliability in the Liturgical Movement that everyone took it for granted that the Latin word “*actuosa*” came from the pen of Pope Pius X, without making any serious effort to investigate the truth of the claim. Such insouciance about authenticity of provenance would not be considered acceptable in the world of fine arts, archaeology, commerce, scientific experiments and many other areas of public life. For provenance is the determining factor in distinguishing between what is genuine and what is fake, and in deciding what information is to be trusted.

Who would give a large sum of money to a dodgy dealer in the antiquities market for an artefact with no identifiable origin? So why should we entrust the infinitely greater value of our souls to the machinations of liturgical reformers when many of their ideas have been exposed by modern researchers as based on fiction?

As for the expression “active participation”, when we consider the question of the authenticity of its provenance, we touch on the moral issue of the reform which includes honesty and integrity. Did Pius X actually use the word *actuosa* (active) or did he not? If he did, where is the document that records it?

True, the Italian version of Pius X’s 1903 *motu proprio*, *Tra le sollecitudini* (TLS), did contain the word “*attiva*” (active) in connection with lay participation in the liturgy. Nevertheless, the only authentic and authoritative document that faithfully reproduces the Pope’s words is the

Latin version, and an attentive reading of that document would show that **the word *actuosa* is entirely missing.**

As with the dog in the Sherlock Holmes story ³ who *didn't* bark in the night, the *absence* of *actuosa* in the document provides us with a significant clue. We cannot avoid the logical conclusion that it was not there because it was not meant to be there. And it was not meant to be there because it did not “fit” with the traditional manner in which the liturgy was conducted. In the culture of Catholic worship, it was customary to describe the faithful as “assisting at Mass” (understood as “being present” at the Holy Sacrifice), “hearing Mass” in silence while the priest “said” the Mass, or “receiving the Sacraments” at the hands of the priest who “administered” them to the faithful. There was no question of the laity having the *duty and responsibility* actively to perform these ceremonies along with or in place of the priest.

That concept, however, was something entirely new in the Church, and has all the characteristics of a mutant gene that has altered some of the material it received from its parent, thus causing it to malfunction. Yet it was adopted officially as the new paradigm for Catholic worship in 1969, to be applied universally in the *Novus Ordo* liturgy.

Contextual evidence

Concerning the Latin version of Pius X's *motu proprio*, let it not be thought that evidence of absence alone is the only argument being adduced to demonstrate that it did not contain the word *actuosa*. Another factor which is equally important, if not more so, is the contextual evidence of the document.

In the wider context, Pius X never mentioned “*actuosa*” in connection with lay participation in the liturgy in any document he had written on Sacred Music before he became Pope – nor, for that matter, did his predecessor, Pope Leo XIII, during his Papacy. Indeed, such a concept was never mentioned in any previous papal document going back in history to the earliest centuries.

If we examine the major documents on the liturgy issued by Pius X anterior to his pontificate, one fact imposes itself: “active participation” was never part of his lexicon. We can show by means of these texts the continuity and remarkable consistency of his thought on the liturgy:

- In 1888, when he was Bishop of Mantua, he held a Synod which issued various decrees on pastoral topics, including the liturgy. The decrees on Sacred Music concerned Gregorian chant, the use of musical instruments, the choice of organ music, the training of seminarians and the exclusion of women from church choirs. The topic of “active participation” was entirely absent.
- In 1893, as Cardinal Patriarch of Venice, he sent a detailed report called a *Votum* to the Sacred Congregation of Rites after Pope Leo XIII had organized a Conference on Gregorian Chant and issued a papal questionnaire. In the *Votum*,⁴ he set out the Church’s official teaching on Sacred Music. This basically followed the principles of Pope Leo’s earlier document, *Ordinatio quoad sacram musicam*, on Sacred Music issued in 1884.⁵ The records plainly show that in their respective documents neither Pope nor Cardinal alluded to “active participation”.
- In 1895, he issued a pastoral Letter on Sacred Music.⁶ It is virtually a reprise of his earlier theme as it reiterates all the points set out in the 1888 Synod and the 1893 *Votum*. Again, there is no mention of “active participation”.

In 1903, he issued his *motu proprio*, the Latin text of which was virtually identical to the above-mentioned decrees and, like them, made no mention of “active participation”. This is hardly surprising, since Pope Pius X was following the prescriptions of the Council of Trent⁷ which did not mention it either.

The discrepancy between the two documents – the vernacular and the Latin versions – is not insignificant, for the word “active” and its equivalent in the various vernaculars would determine the outcome of the whole liturgical reform, whereas the Latin version, which lacked any equivalent reference, simply preserved and fostered Tradition.

Who put the “active” into “participation”?

It is only in the Italian version (which lacks the authoritative status of the Latin version) that the expression *partecipazione attiva* made its sudden and unexpected irruption. One theory of how the Italian phrase “*partecipazione attiva*” (“active participation”) found its way into *TLS* is that it could have been inserted by the person who actually drew up the text, the Vatican musicologist Fr Angelo de Santi SJ who had been closely associated with the Pope’s musical reforms when the latter was Bishop of Mantua and Patriarch of Venice.⁸ This is a distinct possibility, considering that Fr de

Santi was known to have used this expression in articles he had written on Sacred Music even before the 1903 *motu proprio*. ⁹

The preparation of the Latin version, on the other hand, was the responsibility of a special Vatican department ¹⁰ charged with producing the authentic texts of papal and curial documents. And that, as we have shown, contains no reference to *actuosa*. If the idea of lay “active participation” had really originated from Pius X, such a major disciplinary change affecting the universal Church would have been recorded in the *editio typica* of the Roman Missal which was promulgated in 1920. The accompanying Decree of the Congregation of Rites (25 July) states that this is the edition of 1900 incorporating only those changes arising from “recent liturgical prescriptions”. ¹¹

But, of course, it was not there; nor could it have been. For the participation of the laity was never the object of liturgical rubrics. Significantly, the instructions for singing during the ceremonies are directed throughout the Missal *exclusively* at the priest celebrant and the choir – which, as we shall see in the next chapter, was precisely what Pius X had ordered in his 1903 *motu proprio*.

It is also worth remembering that no mention of “*participatio actuosa*” by the congregation was made in the 1917 Code of Canon Law which had been drawn up under the direction of Pius X. This was a significant omission, indicating that no change would be made to Canon 1256 which stipulated that the Church’s public worship is a function of its legitimately appointed (clerical) ministers. Nor was any change made to Canon 818 which prohibited the addition of any liturgical arrangements not covered by the rubrics of the Missal.

It will be demonstrated in Chapter 2 that no part of the original Latin document indicates that the Pope envisaged an “active” role for the congregation in any capacity, including sung or spoken responses. It is undeniable that the ingredient “active” did not derive from the Latin text itself, but nevertheless managed to serve the revolutionary agenda of the reformers throughout the 20th century and even into the present day. What is perturbing about this situation is that an expression whose revolutionary impact was felt throughout the Church for decades has no properly authenticated origin.

Exegesis or eisegesis?

Reliance on faulty translations was never the practice in any area of ecclesiastical life before the rise of the Liturgical Movement. Traditionally, the Church used a method of interpretation known as exegesis which draws *out of* the Latin text the meaning its author meant to convey.

On the other hand, there is the method called eisegesis, whereby the translator introduces his own presuppositions and biases *into* the text by “seeing” what he wishes to find in it, e.g. “*actuosa*”. This involves **reading into the text what is not there**.

This was the preferred method of the liturgical reformers who set out to “prove” what were really only their own subjective notions and pre-held agenda for “active participation”. Even today, they obsess so much about the word “active” that they miss the whole point of Pius X’s *motu proprio*.

What does *actuosa* really mean?

The first thing that strikes us is the inability of liturgical commentators to agree on what “active” means in the context of lay participation in the liturgy. Even in the 21st century, the search is ongoing, [12](#) and the true meaning of the word has still eluded their grasp. We can conclude, therefore, that those who enacted the reforms did not, in the most literal sense of the word, *know* what they were talking about. That, however, did not stop them from putting their own interpretations on it.

In fact, the term “*participatio actuosa*” is now considered to have “myriad meanings”. [13](#) It is a classic case of the “equivocation fallacy” when multiple meanings of a single term are conflated and treated as if equivalent. Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass* springs to mind, where words mean whatever you choose them to mean, in accordance with the “Humpty Dumpty principle” of (re)definition. [14](#) This is evidently not the wisest route to follow, for we all know what happened to the eponymous Egg.

The progressivists contend that *actuosa* must be influenced by human values, customs and institutions. In this they are supported by §§37-40 of Vatican II’s Liturgy Constitution which allow the liturgy to incorporate the cultural and social identities of all local communities, including their languages. But this inescapably turns the decision-making process into a subjective evaluation system, so that no agreed limit can be set on what to

include in the liturgy, and no easily identifiable grounds can be found for excluding anything either. ¹⁵

Their more conservative counterparts, however, insist that *actuosa* means incorporating some traditional customs of genuflecting, making the sign of the Cross etc., with a dash of “dialogue” and congregational singing, plus the odd moment of silence for “contemplation”.

The question is: which of the two sides (if either) is in the right?

In order to find the true meaning of *actuosa* – which, as we have seen, Pius X did not use in his 1903 *motu proprio* – the only reliable method to settle all disputes is to check its etymology. ¹⁶ This will show us how we arrived at its present usage which is the best indicator of what it means today.

True to form, the Latin word has not changed meaning since its use in classical antiquity. *Actuosus* – to give it its dictionary entry form – meant the same for Seneca and Cicero as it did for St Augustine, all of whom used the word to describe **vigorous activity involving movement of the body**. We know this from the work of the 8th century Benedictine monk, Paul the Deacon, an important member of Charlemagne’s court, who recorded its meaning from Roman times for posterity. ¹⁷

And ever since, all authoritative Latin dictionaries have defined *actuosus* as “very active, full of activity” i.e. to a greater degree than other Latin words which denote activity, such as *activus* and *actualis*. But Paul the Deacon had done more than provide a historical record. He put flesh on the bones of the word *actuosus*, showing how it was used to describe, for example, the actions of “*saltatores et histriones*” (dancers and actors). ¹⁸

Progressivists 1, Conservatives 0

This brings us to a curious anomaly which can be observed among the more “conservative” (but definitely not “traditional”) leaders of the modern Church who reject vaudeville performances in the liturgy as an example of true “*participatio actuosa*”. Into this category falls, for example, the former Cardinal Ratzinger who wrote that “it is totally absurd to try to make the liturgy ‘attractive’ by introducing dancing pantomimes...which frequently ...end with applause”. ¹⁹ But, on the contrary, that is a logical outcome consistent with the very meaning of *actuosa*. The real absurdity lies in

objecting to such pantomimes while encouraging Vatican II's call for an "inculturated" liturgy based on "*participatio actuosa*".

How ironic, then, that those who have introduced into the liturgy elements of the entertainment world such as clowns, jokes, puppets and dancing girls cavorting around the sanctuary, are in line with the true meaning of "*participatio actuosa*", while those who criticize these activities as "abuses" have misunderstood it and are, therefore, mistaken!

The Martha-Mary dichotomy

Like it or not, the fact remains that *actuosus* depicts **bodily movements of the most energetic kind**, including theatrical performances. In classical Roman literature, as well as in the writings of the Church Fathers, it was always used in direct contrast to *otiosus* which indicates a state of calm conducive to contemplation. Moreover, it was accepted that one tends to preclude the other.

Nevertheless, the more conservative liturgical leaders and their followers are still desperately trying to square the epistemological circle by maintaining that *actuosus* means "actual" rather than "active", while others claim that it means "sincere, from the heart". It is obvious that they are trying to reconcile their bogus claim with the semantic evidence that contradicts it. Yet such evidence is generally suppressed because to admit it would invalidate the very basis of the liturgical reform.

This redefinition of *actuosus* has, generally speaking, been the position of Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI as well as various Heads of the post-Conciliar Congregation for Divine Worship, up to and including Cardinal Sarah. It comes across as an attempt to "sanitize" what they all admitted was problematic for the Church.

However, they all stopped short of declaring the reform to have been a mistake. They refuse to accept that the concept of "active participation" is fundamentally flawed, and claim that "abuses" have ruined the principles on which it was originally based. In other words, having set this wild hare running, the Holy See then tries to pretend that it is not responsible for the consequences.

The central paradox

So they are well and truly stuck in a dilemma of their own making: how can a distinction be made between "active participation" and "liturgical abuse",

when “active participation” itself is the key means by which the “liturgical abuses” are actually put into operation? This may seem a moot point, a mere hypothesis of no practical importance, until we realize that the reformers have made “active participation” the battle-ground on which another of Vatican II’s slogans – “the common priesthood of the faithful” – is fought. Its rationale was to confer on the congregation the right to perform parts of the Mass that were the purview of the true active ministers of the liturgy i.e. the clergy alone. It follows that, by negating in practice the strict separation that necessarily exists between priests and laity, “active participation” undermines the unique nature of the ordained priesthood.

An impossible conundrum

Wherever the *Novus Ordo* is celebrated, the confusion caused by the novelty of “active participation” has left the Church in turmoil. If everything is the wrong way round and upside down, (the priest facing the people, the congregation saying/singing the Mass, lay readers and Eucharistic ministers in the sanctuary, Communion in the hand, the sacred vessels handled by anyone, etc.) that is because the *Novus Ordo* reverses the established order of things, upsetting traditional law and logic, to the detriment of the Faith.

Even the popes cannot solve the conundrum because they themselves promote the basic premise of the reforms. They pay lip-service to the Church’s teaching that the two “priesthoods” (ordained and lay) are neither synonymous nor on an equal footing. But they also promote “active participation” in the liturgy which effectively conflates the two, and even raises the profile of the laity above that of the clergy, in accordance with the reformers’ wishes.

Why this conundrum cannot be solved is because “active participation” is a neologism, an artificially created catch-phrase that does not reflect Catholic reality, and will, consequently, always be incompatible with it.

The only way to avoid falling into this liturgical tar pit in the first place is not to adopt the Vatican II wording or its frames of reference. If we wish to avoid such a sticky fate, it would be both practical and prudent, for the good of our souls, to adhere to the pre-1956 rite of Mass which stands unambiguously for Catholic orthodoxy and tradition.

We know from one of the progressive Fathers of Vatican II, Cardinal Danneels of Belgium, who had been involved in drafting the Constitution

on the Liturgy, that the aim of “active participation” was to democratize the liturgy by blurring the distinction between priestly and lay roles:

“From its very beginnings, the aim of the Liturgical Movement, which originated in Belgium in 1909, was to close the gap between the official liturgy of the priest and that of the people. The term ‘active participation’ was born out of this movement and has since become part of our common usage”. [20](#)

Its usage has become so common that hardly anyone now stands aghast at the suggestion that lay people can be “empowered” to exercise an official role in the liturgy through their “active participation”. That was a concept heavily promoted at Vatican II, but the traditional teaching of the Church is different. From this we learn that the priest, through the Sacrament of Ordination, acts in the name of the Church, in an official act of the liturgy. But lay people, by virtue of their Baptism, merely associate themselves with the official liturgy through their presence and internal participation by faith and prayer.

Although many have argued – wrongly – that “active participation” by the laity could be interpreted differently, nevertheless the expression was driven by its own internal logic to focus attention on the people and give them an inflated sense of their own activities in the liturgy. The inevitable result – though few realized it at the time – was that it would be used to justify the destruction of centuries of Catholic liturgy and the creation of a radically new Mass in which the “People of God” are regarded as the celebrants on an equal footing with the priests.

The result of the new emphasis on “active participation” was that the people in the pews, who had for centuries been participating in the ceremonies of the Roman Rite in silence, were now transformed into rivals in a liturgical war with the clergy over the right to perform functions in the liturgy.

The verbal legacy of Communism

Furthermore, the expression “active participation” is an example of the insidious *langue de bois* (“wooden language”) – the French term [21](#) for the bureaucratic lingo that was spoken and written by Soviet leaders and functionaries to disguise the fact that their policies were not implemented for the good of the people. It may come as a surprise to most Catholics today that the type of rhetoric imbued with Marxist-Leninist ideals which

once characterized Soviet propaganda would be redeployed to further the aims of the Liturgical Movement and Vatican II. By ruthlessly imposing the slogan “active participation” in every aspect of the liturgy and brooking no argument against it, the reformers have adopted a strategy that is innate in all totalitarian regimes: the abuse of language and power. And by this means they have ensured the success of the Liturgical Revolution.

2. WHAT DID POPE PIUS X REALLY SAY?

Which version to follow – the vernacular or Latin?

In order to be certain about the meaning of the words by which Pope Pius X expressed his intentions regarding the liturgy, it is necessary to consult the original Latin version of his *motu proprio*. The reason for doing so can be easily explained. Latin, rather than any vernacular version, assures accuracy in the transmission and correct understanding of information.

As the use of Latin in drafting documents was considered by the Church as the ultimate safeguard of objectivity, it is vitally important for the faithful transmission of the truth in a seamless way. Later generations of Catholics can recognize in the Latin words the exact meaning intended by the Popes. Thus it averted the risk of misleading the faithful through imprecise formulas or the rapid changes in meaning typical of vernacular languages.

For ecclesiastic documents – magisterial, liturgical and legal – issued by Popes throughout the history of the Church, the Latin version was always considered the normative one. Only the Latin text of Pius X’s Code of Canon Law, [22](#) for example, had force of law. The same applies to his *motu proprio* which describes itself as a “juridical code of sacred music” issued for the universal Church with the “fullness of Our Apostolic Authority” and having the “force of law”.

It is pertinent to ask how such a phrase as “active participation”, dangerously imprecise in its scope, could have found its way into a juridical code of sacred music intended to apply the Pope’s instructions on the liturgy with the force of law and on his own Apostolic Authority.

Unsurprisingly, misrepresentation is exactly what happened when the vernacular version of the *motu proprio* (*Tra le sollecitudini*, hereafter *TLS*) was placed into the hands of liturgical reformers. An examination of this document will show that it contains a number of strategic words and phrases for which there is no translational equivalence in the Latin version. In other words, ideas had been inserted into *TLS* which pander to the aims and objectives of those who wanted to change the liturgy in ways not envisaged by Pope Pius X.

It is noteworthy that the reformers could not have misinterpreted the Pope's words in the Latin version because it was drafted with a tamper-proof precision designed to give the crystal-clear meaning of the Pope and deny any wiggle room for liturgical interventionists. But, for all its official status, the Italian version, as with all documents in the vernacular, could offer no such guarantees. In fact, the more it was translated into other vernacular languages, the greater the confusion and error that was transmitted.

It follows that, where there are discrepancies between the Latin and vernacular, the corresponding Latin version predominates.

As we shall see below, a rigorous study of *TLS* would confirm that it is riddled with ambiguities, nuances and concepts not found in the Latin text. So, those unwise enough to rely on the various vernacular interpretations of *TLS* have only second-, third- and fourth-hand corruptions of the Latin, with each version, as if by a centrifugal force, diverging further from the original.

The principle of relativism

It is understandable that *actuosa* was not used in the Latin version of the *motu proprio* for the following reasons.

First, because the word lends itself to a vague and general interpretation: its very fluidity would have made the application of the law not only problematic in its own day, but also subject to a broad interpretation by future lawmakers. And indeed, as recent history has shown, the range of possible interpretations of "active participation" is limitless and continues to expand exponentially. That is because, as we have seen in the previous chapter, each person or group, including the Popes, who uses the phrase has a personal definition of it. Nor is it possible to contain or control its expansion without nullifying §14 of the Constitution on the Liturgy which

declared “active participation” to be *the* overriding goal to which all other considerations are subordinated.

Secondly, “active participation” is based on a falsehood, the principle of relativism, whereby the liturgy handed down through the centuries is adapted to the subjective and changing perceptions of the people participating. These vary from parish to parish, from one *Novus Ordo* Mass to another, depending on how each Liturgy Committee assesses a particular group’s cultural norms and values. Although few could have realized it in 1963, this was the fundamental import of §19 of the Constitution on the Liturgy, ²³ which, of course, spelt the end for the objective liturgical tradition.

It is not difficult to envisage how the liturgical reforms have been affected by decades of linguistic misunderstanding on the part of pastors who had never consulted the normative Latin source, and who were dependent on corrupted translations. They simply relied on whatever the revolutionary reformers had told them. As a result, “active participation” was eventually taken for granted by all *Novus Ordo* priests, despite its capacity to overthrow the objective liturgical tradition and the rubrical framework that held it firmly in place.

Such a system has the obvious potential to be exploited in order to meet the reformers’ perceptions of the “good of the Church” – a phrase used in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (§ 23) as an excuse to introduce “innovations”. But without accurate information, found only in the Latin text of the *motu proprio*, how could those responsible for liturgical reforms make sound decisions consonant with the Church’s self-understanding?

Pope Pius X’s intentions

The subject matter of the *motu proprio* was the restoration of sacred music, particularly Gregorian Chant, in the Church’s liturgy. Its purpose was to lay down the true principles of liturgical music, both vocal and instrumental, to be disseminated throughout the world. It is of the greatest importance to our study that the *motu proprio* was *not* about congregational singing but about the clergy and the choir as the only members of the Church with the right and duty to perform liturgical chant. It laid down no obligation for the congregation to join in the chant or requirement for lay people as a whole to be trained in liturgical singing. Nor did it state or even imply that silence on

the part of the congregation indicated an absence of, or deficiency in, their full participation in the liturgy.

As for the formation of choirs consisting of members of the congregation i.e. groups of men and women singing together or girls and women alone, there was no provision whatsoever in the *motu proprio*. This had been a bone of contention for years between some progressive Bishops and the Holy See resulting, as we shall see in Chapter 5, in the concession of such choirs in 1908.

Some points of concern

The *motu proprio* was first published in Italian on 22 November 1903 in the *Acta Sanctae Sedis*, the official organ of the Holy See, but the Latin version bearing the same date did not see the light of day until later, after many intervening documents. Both texts can be accessed at the Vatican website. [24](#)

This wide separation of the texts is a departure from the protocol observed by the compilers of the *Acta Sanctae Sedis* who normally published vernacular and Latin texts consecutively for the purposes of transparency and convenient reference.

Another notable anomaly is the manner in which the Latin version is dated. Instead of the customary format which, with rare exceptions, is found in the *Acta Sanctae Sedis* since 1865, it was written according to the method of calculation of the ancient Romans as *X Kalendas Decembris*. Thus, for those who are not familiar with the ancient dating system, the impression is given that the Latin text was composed some time in December, after *TLS*, as if it were an afterthought and of relative unimportance. But, in fact, *X Kalendas Decembris* is the equivalent of 22 November, the same date as *TLS*. [25](#)

This has prompted some to assume that the Italian version, because it was printed first and is, moreover, the only version they know, is *the* official papal text. And there is the fact (almost certainly unknown to most) that a footnote appended to the text of the Latin version refers the reader to the vernacular version as a “*textus officialis*”. But it is obviously not the only official text. It is “official” in the sense of having been published by officials of the Vatican bureaucracy, but the fact remains that the Latin is invariably the only authoritative *and* official version of papal documents, even in the extremely rare event that it only becomes available later.

Out of sight, out of mind

The Latin version was buried from immediate view and relegated to an inconvenient position. To add to the difficulties in locating the Latin text, the page number in the *Acta Sanctae Sedis* was printed as 587 instead of 387, thus misdirecting the researcher.

Why such obfuscation surrounding the only version of the *motu proprio* (i.e. the Latin) which conveys in indisputable terms the mind of the Pope? The answer will become clear when we come to examine the important discrepancies between the two documents.

Some discrepancies between the Latin and vernacular texts

We shall deal here with the Italian version of *TLS* published in the *Acta Sanctae Sedis* in relation to the authentic Latin text and show how, on the crucial issue of the participation of the faithful in the liturgy, they diverge in meaning. Clearly, they cannot *both* represent the mind of the Pope.

Let us examine §3 of the Latin version which indicates Pope Pius X's intentions. It says in a few succinct words that Gregorian Chant, transmitted by tradition, is to be fully restored to the sacred rites:

Cantus gregorianus, quem transmisit traditio, in sacris solemnibus omnino est instaurandus.

It then goes on to explain why Gregorian Chant should be given back to the people – so that the Christian faithful may once again, in the custom of their forebears, participate more ardently in the liturgy:

Praesertim apud populum cantus gregorianus est instaurandus, quo vehementius Christicolae, more maiorum, sacrae liturgiae sint rursus participes.

Now we shall examine the pitfalls of having a document in the vernacular (both Italian and English) and the misapprehensions that can arise because of faulty translations.

“By the people”

TLS says that Gregorian Chant should be restored *nell'uso del popolo* (for the use of the people) in the liturgy. It does not specify which people or for

what purpose – singing or listening – they are to use the Chant. Even worse, the English version states that the use of Gregorian Chant *by* the people is what the Pope intended. The underlying suggestion made by these vague and generalized paraphrases is that “the people” means the whole congregation and that the Pope wanted them all to join in the Chant.

But that is an assumption that is not supported by the Latin text which states that Gregorian Chant is to be restored *apud populum* i.e. among or in the presence of the faithful; in other words, in the churches. The Pope had already expressed this idea in his Introduction: *ubi Christicolae congregantur* (where the Christian faithful gather).

Apud is a preposition which indicates proximity or geographical location and cannot be translated by a phrase indicating instrumentality, as in something done “by the people”. In saying that Gregorian Chant should be restored to the people, the Pope gave no indication in this passage or elsewhere in the document that he wanted it to be sung by all the faithful.

“Active participation”

The problem revolves around the interpretation of “participation” of the laity in the liturgy as understood by Pope Pius X. Whereas the noun *participatio* is used on its own in the Latin version, *TLS* exceeds the bounds of equivalence by adding the word “active”: “*partecipazione attiva*” to it. This happens more than once, even though there is no equivalent of “active” in the Latin text.

As accuracy is of primary concern in order to ensure that translations convey the full meaning of the original, it cannot be assumed that the drafter of the Latin version felt no need to include the equivalent of “active” on the grounds that this was implied in “participation”.

No part of the Latin version of the *motu proprio* indicates that the Pope envisaged an “active” role for the congregation. Paragraphs 12-14 show that the only authorized lay performers are choir members, women excluded. As the *raison d’être* of Gregorian Chant was the text, not the people, the intention of the Pope was to clothe the text with beauty (“*verba liturgiae exornare*”), not to make the people vociferate. Those who insist that *TLS* was a manifesto for congregational singing make the mistake of giving precedence to the people’s “active” participation over the *lex orandi* (the liturgical texts and ceremonies which transmit the Faith).

“A more active part”

The Latin version uses the word *vehementius* to indicate the manner in which the faithful should participate in the liturgy. This is loosely and incorrectly translated in the Italian and English versions to say that all should play a “more active part” (*parte più attiva*) in the liturgy, and the impression is given that this is accomplished by everyone singing Gregorian Chant. But the Latin text does not support this conclusion.

Vehementius is related to the Latin adverb *vehementer* which has been used throughout classical antiquity and also in ecclesiastical texts to indicate intensity of emotions, strength of feelings and other interior dispositions of the human heart. It is often translated by “greatly” or “exceedingly”. ²⁶ Pope Pius X used it thus: *vehementer optemus* (“We strongly wish”) in the Introduction to the *motu proprio* to show his fervent desire to restore Gregorian Chant. He also used it in his encyclical *Vehementer Nos* of 1906 to convey the depth of his grief over the injustices to the Church occasioned by the recent French law on state secularism.

Vehementius, the comparative form of *vehementer*, can be translated by “more ardently/more fervently/to a greater degree”. There are no grounds for believing that the Pope was making a comparison between singers and non-singers or suggesting that the latter were somehow deficient in relation to the former. Rather, he was comparing the suitability of Gregorian Chant and profane styles of music ²⁷ in their ability to enhance prayerful participation in the liturgy.

In §2, the Pope referred to the special power of the right sort of sacred music on the minds of the faithful who listen to it (*in animis audientium illam*), moving them to devotion and making them better disposed for the reception of the fruits of grace coming from the celebration of the Mass. The key concept here is that an intellectual grasp of the “other-worldly” nature of the Mass is greatly facilitated by listening to the sublime strains of Gregorian Chant sung by a well trained choir – not by the exercise of one’s own vocal cords.

Listening is therefore approved by the Pope as a way of participating fruitfully in the liturgy. This is reinforced in §9 which states that the Chant must be sung by the choir for the benefit of the faithful who listen, and in such a way that it must be intelligible to them i.e. clearly enunciated ²⁸ so as

not to obscure the text: *intelligibili forma Christicolis audientibus est canendum*.

But in order to produce the desired effect of appealing to the higher faculties of the soul, especially the intellect, the execution of the Chant must be undertaken by trained choirs: the voices must be pure, restrained, lacking any element of worldliness or self-expression. This was one of the reasons why the Pope did not include a role for the congregation in singing any part of the liturgy.

Sacred music in the Mass has always been regarded as “participatory” for the faithful insofar as it functions to edify, educate, and lift them to devotion. So pursuing one’s private devotions to the background of liturgical chant performed by the choir cannot be interpreted as non-participation. Yet the liturgical reformers argued that a true understanding of the Mass by the faithful required the elimination of such silent prayers in favour of direct vocal participation. Pope Pius X had given no such directive.

“In ancient times”

Liturgists have hastily jumped to the conclusion that the Pope wanted the Church to return to the practice of the early Christians who had included some congregational singing in the liturgy. Where did they get that impression? Certainly not from the Latin version of the *motu proprio* which mentions nothing about “ancient times”.

The impression arose from the vernacular texts regarding a misunderstanding of the Latin phrase *more maiorum* as used by Pope Pius X in §3 with reference to Gregorian Chant. The Italian version uses the ambiguous expression “*anticamente*” which could mean either in antiquity ²⁹ or simply formerly. The English version, ignoring the second meaning, states that Gregorian Chant used to be the custom in some unspecified “ancient times”. But neither comes near to an accurate translation of *more maiorum*.

We need to know the relevance of this particular phrase and why it was chosen as being most appropriate. The *mos maiorum* (custom of the ancestors) was the unwritten code of traditional values observed by the ancient Romans and incorporated into their laws. It represented their time-honoured cultural and social practices and provided guidelines for private, political, and military life in Roman times. ³⁰ Just as adherence to tradition

gave the Romans a sense of what was fitting and proper, the same could be said for the suitability of Gregorian Chant which had a long and venerable tradition in the Church. The *mos maiorum* was the medium of transmission of Gregorian Chant, as the Pope explained: it had been handed down by tradition (*quem transmisit traditio*).

Now we can see clearly why it should be restored to the people: so that, through its special power to move the soul, they can once again participate in the liturgy *more maiorum* – in the custom of previous generations of Catholics before the fashion for theatrical and profane music had invaded the churches.

There is thus no reference to or recommendation of congregational singing which, if it took place at some times and in some places, was never an established and universal custom of the Roman Rite. So it could not have been designated as part of the *mos maiorum*.

We can be sure that the translation “in ancient times” is false for two reasons. First, because *more maiorum* refers to an ongoing, unbroken tradition and secondly because customs that have been discarded for centuries cannot be reincorporated into the liturgy without destroying its intrinsically traditional nature. Indeed, any attempt to do so was later condemned as “antiquarianism” by Pope Pius XII in *Mediator Dei*.

The spirit of novelty

Anyone who pauses to reflect on the implications of this anomaly can see what is amiss. In any translation an exact conformity is required to carry over (which is the meaning of “translate”) the same ideas from one language to another. But in the case of *TLS* (and its further translation into other vernacular languages), some interested party has obviously had a powerful influence in the choice of phrases which promote the agenda of the reformers. This independent spirit is strikingly evident at those key points where *TLS* (and other vernacular versions) diverge from the Latin text. These can be summed up as follows:

- A call to adopt the liturgical practices of the early Church;
- The suggestion that vocalization by the laity is the litmus test of their true participation in the liturgy;
-

A shift in emphasis towards the “common priesthood of the baptized” and away from the sacramental priesthood of the priest, who alone offers the Mass in an official capacity for the living and the dead;

- An implied criticism of silent participation by the laity who may be saying private prayers during Mass.

As to which of these points Pope Pius X subscribed to, the answer is none of the above.

The laity as listeners, not singers

There is simply no convincing evidence in his *motu proprio* that Pius X intended the congregation to participate by singing Gregorian Chant, for he stated that “singers in church have a real liturgical office”. Therefore, he designated the clergy and the all-male choir as the sole legitimate executants of Gregorian Chant. We may infer that the congregation was, by definition, *not* included in this form of participation.

It is clear, then, that Pius X regarded the laity as listeners, not singers. This is reinforced in another part of the same document where he mentioned two distinct categories of participants in the liturgy: those who sing (the clergy and the choir) and those for whose spiritual benefit the singing is undertaken (the rest of the faithful).

This makes perfect sense only in terms of traditional Catholic worship, as it is the clergy who communicate the divine to the faithful by the performance of the rites. Of course, there have always been times when at least some members of the congregation would sing during the liturgy, either spontaneously or because they felt compelled to do so under duress from their priests. But there are simply no grounds for believing that Pius X acknowledged a *right* and a *duty* for the congregation to perform the singing along with the clergy and the choir.

In §2 of the General Principles, Pius X referred first to the holiness of Gregorian Chant and the “manner in which it is presented by those who execute it”. Then he mentioned the efficacy of such music in touching the hearts and minds of those who listen to it (“*in animis audientium illam*”). However, a condition applies. In order to produce the desired effect of helping the soul to attain deeper levels of contemplation of the divine mysteries, the singing must “*semper optime canatur*” (always be sung to the highest standards [31](#)), and the voices competently trained for that purpose.

That is why Pius X called for *Scholae Cantorum* to be established in seminaries and religious institutions “for the execution of sacred polyphony and of good liturgical music” (§25), and also at parochial level, “even in smaller churches and country parishes”. (§27) At no point in the document did the Pope give instructions, as his successors would do, for the performance of congregational singing.

The logic of true participation

But the traditional Roman Rite, which had withstood the test of time and was fine-tuned to be quintessentially Catholic, had a logic of its own which was understood (alas, this is no longer the case) by all practising Catholics, no matter what century they lived in. St Thomas More explained it thus:

“Good folk find this indeed, that when they be at the divine service in the church, the more devoutly that they see such godly ceremonies observed, and the more solemnity that they see therein, the more devotion feel they themselves therewith in their own souls”. ³²

That was precisely the logic of Pius X’s *motu proprio*. In the Introduction, the Pope singled out from among his many concerns the one that was of the greatest importance: ³³ to promote the “decorum of the house of God” and the solemnity and splendour of the ceremonies. Therefore, he said, nothing should take place that would disturb or diminish the prayer and piety of the faithful who participated by drawing spiritual sustenance from the actions of the priest and his ministers in the sanctuary.

This was the reality of lay participation experienced by countless Catholics for centuries, before the Liturgical Movement discredited the practice and reviled the faithful as “silent spectators”. But, as far as the liturgical reformers were concerned, the question of fidelity to Tradition was academic: neither ethics nor truth was required, simply the strong arm of the law to impose an ongoing revolution.

A question of logic

To illustrate the point, we will make use of the Medieval adage, *ex falso quodlibet* (“from a falsehood, anything follows”), meaning that once a contradiction is admitted as truth, any conclusion, however nonsensical, can logically be derived from it. ³⁴

When applied to the *Novus Ordo* liturgy, this principle explains the logical underpinnings of the regime of novelty. Once “active participation” is accepted as an authentic and indispensable method of lay involvement in the liturgy, any activity – no matter how inappropriate, sacrilegious or offensive to morals – flows logically from the false premise.

Even though the logic of the liturgical reforms makes sense within its own terms of reference, its starting-point (“active participation”) was wrong. So, its conclusions (the practical consequences as evidenced in the *Novus Ordo* Mass) were also wrong in spite of the correctness of its logic, or rather, *because* of it.

The truth of this adage was demonstrated by St Thomas More in the 16th century in one of his polemical treatises against the Protestant reformers, who had rejected the doctrine of the Real Presence and changed their liturgies to suit. When William Tyndale mocked some of the Church’s traditional rituals as superstitious practices, More replied that anyone capable of deriding the way devout Catholics worshipped over the centuries is also likely to disdain the Eucharist itself. [35](#)

This principle also explains why so many Churchmen see nothing at all amiss with the routine irreverence displayed during the liturgy, especially to the Eucharistic Presence, and do not “see” the most outrageous examples of profanation, even though they hit you right in the eye. These are the inevitable outcomes of the all-encompassing directive of Vatican II’s Liturgy Constitution which makes “active participation” the primary consideration of the liturgy. Those who enact it are, after all, only obeying the logic of the reforms, and are convinced they are perfectly correct.

Thus, the root of the present crisis in the liturgy can be traced to that single word “active” found in the vernacular version of the *motu proprio* and reiterated in subsequent magisterial documents. Because it stood in contradiction to Tradition – in fact, it was expressly intended by the reformers to stamp out the contemplative and devotional dimension of worship which provided a sense of reverence and awe – it had the effect of causing the entire logical framework of the *lex orandi* to “explode”. This is only to be expected, as the adage *ex falso quodlibet* is also called “the principle of explosion”. Providentially, there is no such tripwire in the Latin *motu proprio* of Pope Pius X.

3. ENTER DOM LAMBERT BEAUDUIN

After the fateful and entirely inappropriate expression “active participation” appeared out of the blue in 1903, it got a muted reception. Few people – unless they had a goal to score – knew what to make of it or what to do with it. The first person to pick up the ball and run with it was the Benedictine monk, Dom Lambert Beauduin (1873-1960), a monk of the Monastery of Mont-César in Louvain (Belgium). His goal was both ecumenical and secular: to promote the “universal priesthood of all believers” through “participatory” liturgy and unite them in a common programme of social reform and pan-Christian “unity”.

It was not for nothing that Beauduin is regarded as a pioneer of the Liturgical as well as the Ecumenical Movement and a “prophet” of the Second Vatican Council. His influence on the direction of Vatican II was far wider and deeper than is generally known. He actually anticipated by half a century the most important progressive positions of Vatican II in the key areas of liturgy, “Ecumenism” and ecclesiology. His confrere, Dom Olivier Rousseau, remarked:

“Today the fruits of his efforts can be discerned in nearly every movement which has marked the Church in this [20th] century. The three most important doctrinal advances of Vatican II...were in the areas of liturgy, ecumenism, and ecclesiology...Thus Beauduin was one of the great forerunners of Vatican II in its three key areas”. [36](#)

In 1925, Beauduin founded a monastery at Amay-sur-Meuse (later moved to Chevetogne) for “Ecumenical” purposes. Both Mont-César and Amay were to become, under Beauduin’s influence, the nexus of strategic planning for various projects: promoting “active participation” among the laity, adapting the liturgy to contemporary needs, linking it to social activism, reorienting monastic life towards the world outside the cloister, and fostering “Ecumenism” among different religious denominations without seeking conversion to Catholicism. Looking back now from the vantage point of our own times, we can see how Vatican II (under the heading of the “New Evangelization”) mirrored and brought to fruition Beauduin’s pioneering efforts in all these areas.

The barbarian in the citadel

Beauduin's decision to become a monk of the Monastery of Mont-César in 1906 was critical for the development of the Liturgical Movement. Within the protection of its walls, he was able to exploit the Monastery's financial resources to launch the Liturgical Movement in a way that was not possible for a simple parish priest. He had at his disposal a willing cohort of monks to help prepare his publications, which he disseminated by means of the Monastery's printing press, and he hosted Liturgical Weeks and retreats in the Monastery's accommodation.

From the beginning of his clerical career, Beauduin revealed a deep alienation from the values and spirituality of traditional Catholicism as manifested in the liturgy of the Roman Rite. Even in his seminary days, he rebelled against the regime which, he claimed, taught nothing about the liturgy except courses on rubrics. ³⁷ These he dismissed derisively as a "series of minutely detailed and arbitrary rules imposed, it would seem, to try the patience of those who study them and put them into practice". ³⁸

As for the traditional Missal, it was, for him, "*un livre fermé et scellé*" (a closed and sealed book); he considered the liturgical books in general to be no more than "*des grimoires*" (mumbo jumbo, incantations and magical formulae). He also admitted that that he had never recited his Breviary with the least devotion or interest. ³⁹

We should not, however, take these self-deprecatory statements at face value. It is more likely that they were meant as an oblique criticism of traditional methods of priestly formation of which he was the supposed victim. These he dismissed as being totally ineffective for fostering the spiritual life, describing them as hidebound by archaic structures and rigid disciplinary rules. (He was not, however, willing to concede that the same seminaries were producing numerous educated and holy men in the priesthood who were devoted to the Mass and the Sacraments, and were equipped with the necessary knowledge for the discharge of their ministry). And, to cap it all, he pursued a campaign of increasing hostility to Catholic devotions such as visits to the Blessed Sacrament – a staple of all seminary training.

It is clear that, as a priest, Beauduin had not benefited from – because he rejected – a formation in piety and discipline; nor had he imbibed any love or respect for traditional Catholic theology as taught in the seminaries. For

him, such studies were too abstract and precise, too “mathematical”: he compared them to “*un théorème de géométrie ou d’algèbre*” (a theorem in geometry or algebra).⁴⁰ Instead, he leaned toward independence of belief in doctrinal matters, and developed a theology of the Mass that bore a distinct resemblance to Protestantism. Records exist, and have been published by sympathetic biographers, not only of his printed works but also of his private correspondence, illustrating this point. Thus we find that Beauduin entertained notions which indicate a concordance of belief with Protestant critics of the Catholic liturgy.

These were, briefly, that the Mass should be called the Lord’s Supper;⁴¹ the Mass is a “meal” (“*un repas commun*”) celebrated around a “family table”; a “communitarian aspect” of the Eucharist should be promoted in order to build up social communities;⁴² the people should “ratify” the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass,⁴³ and so on in like manner. These few examples reveal quite a considerable degree of alienation from the Catholic doctrine of the Mass. Yet, astoundingly, they became the building blocks of the *Novus Ordo* Mass introduced by Pope Paul VI in 1969, and can be found in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*. By reiterating Beauduin’s proposals for liturgical reform, the Pope officially accepted a Protestant heritage within the Catholic Church.

Of special concern is Beauduin’s attitude to the reserved Blessed Sacrament, which would later exert influence on the placement of the tabernacle in Catholic churches. This aspect of his Eucharistic theology was not commonly known because he only expressed it unambiguously in his private correspondence or during the retreats he organized for priests. But as a result of archival research, some of his letters have been located and their content published at the beginning of the 21st century, revealing Beauduin’s rejection of Catholic theology. These original sources contain many surprises, not to mention shocks, for those who regarded Beauduin as a credible Catholic theologian.

As part of his campaign to discredit the pious custom of visiting the Blessed Sacrament, he wrote that

- “adoration of the reserved Sacrament is not of divine institution: Christ did not say: adore this in memory of Me outside the action [of the Mass]”;⁴⁴
-

“those who adore the Blessed Sacrament outside the Mass have given sustenance to individual piety to the detriment of the collective unity of the Eucharist”; [45](#)

•

“this worship of the God of the Tabernacle is a true heresy”; [46](#)

•

“Our Lord might be infinitely adorable, but He did not come to be adored, but to adore the Father with us and for us”; [47](#)

•

“The faithful adore the Blessed Sacrament because it has to be reserved [as Viaticum], but it is not reserved so that they must adore it”. [48](#)

If we examine closely each of these statements, it will become apparent that they are all fallacious and simply illustrate Beauduin’s mastery of the art of paltering – creating a false impression through the intentional choice of words. By leaving such words open to interpretation and encasing them in convoluted sentences, riddles and irrelevant information, he succeeded in casting doubt on the Divinity of Christ and causing confusion in the minds of the faithful.

Beauduin’s political background

The end of the 19th century was a critical time for social power struggles in Belgium not only between Flemish and Walloon nationalists but between workers and employers. It is a matter of historical record that Beauduin, like many priests of his time, had been involved in trade unionism and class-oriented politics. [49](#) He spent his days in the seminary at Liège under the tutelage of the Professor of Moral Theology, Fr Antoine Pottier, who, as the local leader of the Christian Democrat Movement, was a political firebrand, kindling workers’ demonstrations and strikes. He caused a scandal by calling on workers to reject authority structures and form their own unions without the involvement of their employers. [50](#) In fact, Fr Pottier’s militant pro-worker activities, coupled with his antagonism against employers in Liège, caused Leo XIII to intervene personally in 1895 and require him to give up his social and political activism for the sake of peace and harmony. [51](#)

Soon after his ordination in 1897, Beauduin joined the *Congrégation des Aumôniers du Travail* (Congregation of Industrial Chaplains), a society of worker-priests which had been established by the Bishop of Liège, Mgr

Victor Doutreloux. He then spent seven years living among the workers in the footsteps of Fr Pottier after the latter's enforced retirement from political agitation.

It is not surprising that Beauduin's radicalized past was heavily implicated in his vision of the liturgy. We are assured this was so by one of Beauduin's principal biographers who stated: "his background as a labour chaplain had a tremendous influence upon his liturgical interest". [52](#)

The liturgy politicized

Just as he saw society in terms of a conflict between the rich and the poor, industrialists and workers, he saw a counterpart in the constitution of the Church whose clergy (whom he dubbed the "aristocracy") were allegedly guilty of depriving the ordinary faithful of the means to draw spiritual sustenance from the liturgy. In his inaugural speech made at the Congress of Malines, Belgium, in 1909, Beauduin started the Liturgical Movement on this footing:

"Every child of the Church is a saint in the making. Therefore, the liturgy is not the exclusive preserve of an ascetic aristocracy and placed out of reach of the ordinary Christians". [53](#)

He repeated the same theme at the inauguration of the *Centre de Pastorale Liturgique* in 1945, when he stated that the liturgy was not only for an "elite" ("*non seulement une élite*"), but for "all the faithful, all the People of God" ("*tous les fidèles, tout le Peuple de Dieu*") [54](#) – talking as if there were grounds for the people to feel aggrieved for being "excluded" by the clergy. The innuendo – which was characteristic of Beauduin's polemics against the traditional liturgy – is revealing. It shows that the priest's role was a major issue for the liturgical reformers, and was being used to invoke a sense of injustice among the faithful where none existed before.

Beauduin's friend and admirer, Fr Louis Bouyer, noted the radical implications of his words:

"What a shame the liturgy remains the endowment of an elite", he [Beauduin] stated, "we [clergy] are aristocrats of the liturgy; everyone should be able to nourish himself from it, even the simplest people: we must democratize the liturgy". [55](#)

Given his political formation as a worker-priest and his total immersion in social agitation, it would be difficult to avoid the underlying message in this passage, namely, that the ordinary faithful had for centuries suffered an injustice at the hands of an “aristocratic elite” of clergy who had excluded them from the liturgy by depriving them of “active participation” and reducing them to a cowed silence in the pews. That is certainly the message that the Liturgical Movement had been propagating throughout the 20th century, and accusations of “clericalist elitism” are still being directed against anyone who dares to oppose reforms based on “active participation” of the laity in the liturgy.

The very bloodstream of the Church has been poisoned by this language of protest which depicted the laity as a symbol of injustices perpetrated by the clergy and called for retribution. This, of course, makes a mockery of the very idea of Tradition, replacing it with purely subjective notions based on factors drawn from non-liturgical sources, such as Marxism.

The spirit of egalitarianism

This ideology of the Left is accompanied by the belief that the Church can survive in the modern age only by becoming “democratic” i.e. losing its patriarchal and centralized character. Beauduin particularly disliked the idea of a class system. When he founded his monastery in Amay, he did away with the *pontificalia* – mitres, coats of arms and privileged positions of prelates in the liturgy – and abolished the two-tier system of ordained and non-ordained monks. The whole point of the “democratic” reform was that all, irrespective of rank, would have an equal say in the running of the monastery. [56](#)

In his Malines address, Beauduin blurred the real distinction between the clergy and the laity in liturgical functions, implying that lay people were part of the clerical “hierarchy” and that there was no difference in essence between them, but only of degree:

“All, without distinction, from the Pope to the child learning his catechism, are involved in the same liturgy in varying degrees, participate in the same ceremonies, and are swept along in the same [liturgical] cycle. This shows what a powerful driving force is created in the holy Church by this unification of hearts and minds”. [57](#) [emphases added]

What this passage reveals is that the Church's teaching on the essential difference between the ordained and lay states was concealed by deliberately contrived confusion, and that the Liturgical Movement inaugurated by Beauduin rested on a foundation of sophistry. Any doubt about Beauduin's intention to sow confusion will be dispelled when we consider his avowed plan to "merge all the faithful with the priest and the Divine Victim" ("*confondre tous les fidèles avec le prêtre et la victime Jésus-Christ*") so as to have them participate in the Mass "not as onlookers but as actors" ("*non en témoins, mais en acteurs*"). ⁵⁸ When faced with criticism that "active participation" of the laity in the Mass would undermine the role of the priest, he would pretend to uphold the distinction between lay and clerical states. But that was evidently a subterfuge to throw sand in the eyes of his critics to keep them from questioning his orthodoxy. Let us not forget that, in spite of the lip-service Beauduin paid to the nature of the Church as a hierarchical institution, "democratization" was his original stratagem.

It follows from his call to "democratize the liturgy" that no judgement can be made to distinguish the higher role of the priests from the subsidiary one of the faithful. Or, to put it another way, power must be distributed among *all* the members of the Church to participate "actively" in the liturgy. All participation must therefore be reduced to the lowest common denominator (membership in the "common priesthood of the baptized") to avoid being accused of "elitism".

From this we can gather that the concept of "active participation" was invented to serve the agenda of egalitarianism and insinuate that the traditional liturgy, conducted in a language known to the priests but not generally to the laity, was discriminatory and unfair. It was also the major impetus for the exaggerated importance given to the laity in the Vatican II documents which enlarged the scope and increased the status of their activities in the Church to the detriment of the ordained priesthood.

Preparations for the Liturgical Revolution

At the 1909 Malines Congress, Beauduin set forth his ideas for liturgical reform. The text of his speech was first published in French by the Monastery of Mont-César in 1914 (the year of Pope Pius X's death); then it was translated into English, edited and republished by his disciple, Dom

Virgil Michel OSB, in 1926 at St John's Abbey, Minnesota, under a different title. ⁵⁹

Beauduin began by talking about the “necessity” to renew the Church's liturgy (“*la nécessité de cette rénovation liturgique*”), claiming that “the Christian people no longer find in the liturgy the true expression of their worship”. ⁶⁰ This line of accusation, which pervaded every aspect of the reforms, constituted the corner stone on which the whole edifice of the Liturgical Movement was built: that the traditional rites of the Church, handed down from previous centuries and codified by Pope Pius V in 1570, were incapable, *in and of themselves*, of facilitating true participation for the faithful who attend them.

It was by denigrating Catholic Tradition that Beauduin predisposed the minds of his followers to seek new ways of expressing the liturgical rites. A prime example of this can be seen in an article published in the first edition of *La Maison-Dieu* (1945), the Review of the progressive organization, *Centre de Pastorale Liturgique (CPL)*, which he helped found. In the article, he amassed all the well-worn, stereotypical criticisms of the traditional liturgy known to his readers, while making his words, in the manner of a ventriloquist, appear to have come, not from himself, but from others. These are the calumnies he issued against the traditional liturgy:

- it was “ill adapted to the psychological needs of the faithful in the 20th century”;
- it contained “so many archaic, outdated, stylized, formalistic elements; so many atrophied organs, completely deprived of dynamism, which cannot captivate the contemporary soul; venerable remains of a great reality now passed; museum pieces, silent and lifeless”;
- in the early days of Christianity, it was “vibrant with faith and life”, and nourished the spiritual life of the Christian people, but now [in the 20th century] it is a “dried up husk”, a “mummified” corpse;
- “everything conspires to give us that impression: symbols that have no longer any relevance, antiquated formulas, hieratic gestures [denoting the sacred, performed by the priests], a strange language”;
- “the baptized faithful are in church like foreigners in a land where they know neither the customs nor the language”. ⁶¹

In this way, Beauduin managed to propagandize the whole panoply of criticisms held among the progressive reformers, while appearing to be innocent himself of sharing their ideas. But evidence exists to indicate his general agreement with them.

Fr Paul Doncoeur SJ, one of Beauduin's collaborators in the *CPL*, was among the "sympathetic" liturgists who understood the list of criticisms as representing Beauduin's personal views. In a 1954 article in *La Maison-Dieu*, he reproduced and referenced Beauduin's words, using them as an exact representation of Beauduin's opinion of the traditional liturgy and the magnitude of the task of undertaking a renewal. ⁶² Tellingly, Beauduin made no attempt to counter any of these criticisms and demonstrate their falsehood.

If we examine this list of accusations, we can discern two salient features. First, it reveals his continued use of paltering. The passage gives overwhelming emphasis to words denoting death and decay, so that the impression is given that the traditional Mass was a dead letter, no longer efficacious for, or of interest to, modern Catholics.

Let us consider another example. By mixing objective facts (e.g. Latin is not generally understood by the faithful) with subjective opinions (the liturgy cannot be meaningful for them), his audience is persuaded to embrace a misapprehension of reality, a false view of the actual state of affairs. The truth averred by centuries of Catholic worshippers is that wherever they might travel, whether in their own or a foreign country, they felt equally at home the instant they entered a church where Mass was said in Latin accompanied by the same ceremonial familiar to them from their childhood. And if Beauduin's listeners – or readers – are led to believe something that is not true, it is because his paltering involves the same intent and the same effect as lying. Moreover, history has shown that this form of deception was also practised by Beauduin's heirs and has widely increased *pari passu* with the development of the Liturgical Movement.

Secondly, the list of accusations contains the blueprint for the comprehensive changes to the liturgy that culminated in the *Novus Ordo* of 1969. In line with his call to "democratize the liturgy", Beauduin advocated that Holy Communion should be distributed in the hand to standing communicants, and that all should receive under both Species at every Mass, ⁶³ even though there was no demand from the faithful for these reforms. In his view, each church should have only one altar, as in early

Christian times, with no retable ⁶⁴, tabernacle, shelves or statues. ⁶⁵ Concelebration should be practised in the Roman Rite, ⁶⁶ and all the faithful should be actively involved in the liturgy.

Beauduin's approach to reform can be summed up in his comparison between what he described as the "impoverishment of the current rites and the evangelical dynamism of the ancient liturgy". ⁶⁷ He promoted the view that the Church was guilty of having destroyed the authentic liturgical heritage by a system of "rubricism" – an obsessive preoccupation with rules and regulations – which "impoverished and deformed the living liturgy of the ages of faith". ⁶⁸

Anyone familiar with the history of the liturgy will know that exactly this sort of criticism of Catholic ceremonial was a favourite pastime with Protestant historians. For example, the 19th-century liturgical scholar, Edward Dickinson, stated that "the steady progress of ritualism and the growth of sacerdotal ideas...inevitably deprived the people of all initiative in the worship, and concentrated the offices of public devotion, including that of song, in the hands of the clergy". ⁶⁹

All the evidence suggests that Beauduin, in imitation of 16th-century Protestant reformers, was seized with the desire to disavow virtually the whole of the Church's liturgical heritage and replace it with a new creation, modelled on some notions of early Christian worship patterns. With his skilful use of rhetoric and ventriloquism (as seen above), Beauduin managed to persuade many priests who attended his retreats and Liturgical Weeks that it was imperative to "renew, rejuvenate, popularize, restore, carefully break free from the excessive restrictions of the present discipline of the liturgical rubrics, and give back to the sacramental signs and Christian institutions all their strength and efficaciousness". ⁷⁰

The manipulation of perception

It was Beauduin who first propagated the myth (let's dare to call it a lie) that the custom of silent participation made the laity become "detached" from the liturgy, causing the Mass to lose its communal character and the laity to lose their "community spirit". He interpreted absence of "active participation" as a sign of "almost complete ignorance or apathy among the faithful in regard to the liturgical worship" ⁷¹ and concluded that they

understood nothing of the Mass. This negative and dismissive assessment was echoed by Archbishop Bugnini to justify the *Novus Ordo* reforms on the basis of what he alleged to be a “lack of understanding, ignorance and dark night” ⁷² in the worship of God since the early centuries of the Church. Beauduin did not come to that conclusion by a rational analysis of the objective evidence around him, but simply by a process known as “confirmation bias” – the practice of building a case to justify a conclusion already drawn.

This is evident in the sweeping criticism he made of Catholics attending Mass, simply on the basis of his observation of their outward demeanour in church:

“The people in our churches are lifeless; they are bored; they come only out of a sense of duty, and can hardly wait to leave; their whole attitude indicates that their soul is somewhere else; they no longer pray”. ⁷³

One cannot say that Beauduin treated the evidence before his eyes in an unbiased way, considering that he had a personal interest in providing a “solution” for the alleged problem in the “active participation” of the congregation.

For a truly Catholic understanding of the silent crowds of Catholics attending Mass, let us turn to the late 19th-century priest, Fr Thomas Edward Bridgett, who came to a different conclusion. Significantly, Fr Bridgett had encountered similar sentiments to Beauduin’s, this time from Protestant critics of Catholic ceremonial. In defence of the faithful praying at Mass, he stated:

“It is the worship in spirit and in truth which Jesus Christ foretold; but you who criticise and scoff, you do not know the truth, and you have not the spirit that inspires those hundreds of worshippers whose evident devotion so bewilders you: you see nothing but the altar and the priest, the candles and the genuflections; you see only with the eyes of the body, not with those of the soul, and therefore you laugh and mock, or you wonder and deplore. Turn, then, from what you cannot yet understand; turn and look at the worshippers; watch the faith, the piety, the love, apparent in their postures, or written on their faces”. ⁷⁴

The two perspectives could not be more diametrically opposed. Beauduin’s angle is shown to be consistent with Protestant rejection of Catholic

worship, and reveals that he was looking at the question from the perspective of an outsider to the Faith. Anyone with a Catholic conception of what the Mass really is – and this comes with proper catechesis – would know that Beauduin’s accusations were wildly inaccurate in the context of the large majority of Catholics who understood the meaning of the Mass and attended out of devotion. It is a historically verifiable fact that many did so even outside the times of obligation.

Beauduin was also responsible for spreading another falsehood: that the laity, absorbed in their own private prayers, were indulging in “individualistic worship”, leaving the priest to say the Mass without them. But well-instructed Catholics knew that the Mass was not a private, individual affair, and that they were united with the Church Triumphant, the Church Militant and the Church Suffering (the Communion of Saints) in the Sacrifice of Christ on the altar. In other words, the individual Catholic praying at Mass was already united in the same Faith with the priest whose role was to offer the Holy Sacrifice for the living and the dead.

The traditional Roman Mass as it was celebrated before the 1956 reforms was a perfect expression of the Catholic community united in worshipping in spirit and in truth. This is a fact demonstrated eloquently by Fr Bridgett:

“The prayers of the priest are not substituted for those of the people. No one desires to force his brother against his will. It is the most marvellous union of liberty and law which this earth can show. The beggar with his beads, the child with her pictures, the gentleman with his Missal, the maiden meditating on each mystery of the Passion, or adoring her God in silent love too deep for words, and the grateful communicant, have but one intent, one meaning, and one heart, as they have one action, one object, before their mental vision. They bow themselves to the dust as sinners; they pray to be heard for Christ’s sake; they joyfully accept His words as the words of God; they offer the bread and wine; they unite themselves with the celebrant in the Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ, which he as their priest offers for them; they communicate spiritually; they give thanks for the ineffable gift which God has given them. Their words differ, their thoughts vary; but their hearts are united and their will is one”. [75](#)

A source of liturgical disinformation

Beauduin's series of Liturgical Study Weeks (the first of which was held in 1910) and retreats at the Monastery of Mont-César and other places were specially designed to re-educate parish priests and inoculate them against traditional Catholic values. At these sessions, they were indoctrinated to believe that the Church should return to supposedly "purer", "more authentic" forms of worship, such as the Easter Vigil, the Catechumenate, baptismal ceremonies etc., of the early Christians. At a 1913 Liturgical Week, for example, he "reconstituted" a baptismal ceremony based on a 7th-century rite to illustrate his point. [76](#)

There is a monumental irony, overlooked by all of Beauduin's followers and critics, in this situation. Beauduin was teaching liturgy to the clergy, purporting to rectify their alleged deficiency in training in the seminary, yet according to his fellow-monk and disciple at Mont-César, Dom Bernard Botte, he had never engaged in any serious liturgical studies himself. [77](#) In fact, Dom Botte stated that Beauduin had no time for that sort of intellectual pursuit. His method, rather, was to borrow *ad lib* from the latest research written by certain historians of the liturgy and their sympathisers. Among those whose works he consulted were Mgr Pierre Battifol and Mgr Louis Duchesne, both of whom had works placed on the Index of Forbidden Books by Pope Pius X, [78](#) Dom Fernand Cabrol OSB and Edmund Bishop who idealized the early Christian liturgies. At least we know where Beauduin sourced the inspiration for his reforms.

Beauduin and the 1930 International Liturgical Congress at Antwerp

A Liturgical Week organized by the Belgian Benedictines took place in Antwerp in July 1930. The whole proceedings kept a low profile, being restricted only to those who agreed with Beauduin's ideas. Indeed, it is unlikely that we would know what was said except for the reports in several contemporary newspapers. According to the Louvain correspondent of the *National Catholic Welfare Conference News Service*, it was attended by delegates from different countries and was held in the Concert Hall of the World's Fair. [79](#)

The choice of venue is not without significance: Beauduin had already been silenced by Rome and forced to resign as Prior of the Monastery of

Amay-sur-Meuse which he had founded in 1925 to pursue his initiatives in “Ecumenism”. In 1932, moreover, he was exiled from Belgium by Pius XI who considered his “Ecumenical” initiatives incompatible with Catholic teaching.

In spite of the prohibition, Beauduin did not maintain silence but took an active part in the 1930 Congress where he spoke on the progress of the Liturgical Movement which, he made a point of telling his audience, had reached its “age of majority”, having been personally founded by him in 1909. He then evinced his satisfaction that the Movement had won out (“turned the tide”, as he put it) against the large number of objectors to “active participation” in the Mass.

Beauduin’s display of rodomontade was perfectly in tune with the talks given by other delegates at the Congress who made a series of “triumphalist” statements about the superiority of the newly formed Liturgical Movement over the age-old Catholic Tradition. Let us look at a few examples witnessed and reported by the Press:

- Cardinal Georges Grente of Le Mans, France, stated: “In the Mass many prayers are meant for the people, but the people do not listen; they count their beads”, and warned: “No more mute spectators in our churches!”;
- Dom Cabrol OSB, Abbot of Farnborough Abbey, England, disapproved of the devotional manual, *Garden of the Soul*, being used by the laity during Mass. He admitted that “in no European land is Catholic piety so fervent as in Ireland”, but he criticized it for not being “liturgical”;
- Dom Bernard Capelle OSB of Louvain, Belgium, described the Liturgical Movement as an unstoppable force which, since its inception in 1909, has kept “spreading the liturgical spirit”;
- Fr Carreras of Spain chipped in with monotonous predictability: “Alas, our country has become the classical land of individual devotion; we have turned our backs to the liturgical life of the Church”;
- Fr Fredericus Beukering of Rotterdam stated: “[W]e ought to wrest from the church choirs the singing they wrested from the people”. [80](#)

The polarized nature of the last message apes the standard Marxist outlook by implying that “ownership” of the liturgy was “in the hands of the few” and that the “oppressed masses” should take back what rightfully belongs to them. At this point the Liturgical Movement was effectively turned into a platform for Marxist-style propaganda within the Church.

Beauduin's cynical use of the hierarchy

Beauduin's defenders claim that he was an ardent supporter of the Church's hierarchical constitution and the authority of bishops to oversee the liturgy in their respective dioceses. It is true that he mentioned this subject, if only by way of lip-service. It is important to realize that he was not promoting respect for episcopal authority *per se*, but only insofar as it could be used to his advantage. What he had in mind was that as many members of the hierarchy as possible should be persuaded to become proactive in the Liturgical Movement and present the reformers' *desiderata* to the Congregation of Rites, with a view to gaining Rome's support. ⁸¹ He had a clear, long-term goal in view – to win support from liberal bishops and prelates so that his revolutionary agenda would eventually be imposed by “legitimate authority”.

Few, however, outside the charmed circle of the Liturgical Movement understood the corollary to this argument: if the numbers of progressive bishops committed to liturgical reform reached critical mass, the practice of traditional Catholicism would one day be turned into a prohibited activity by the same authorities. And that is exactly what transpired in 1969 when the traditional Mass was *de facto* outlawed with the imposition of the *Novus Ordo* liturgy. No wonder Beauduin's followers lauded him as a “prophet”.

4. BEAUDUIN AND THE “DIALOGUE MASS”

“Active participation”: a rabbit from a conjuror's hat

It is noteworthy that from the launching of the Liturgical Movement in 1909, some priests began to question whether the lay participation proposed by Beauduin represented the thinking of Pius X, and even suspected that he had simply conjured it up, as the noted liturgist, Fr Louis Bouyer, informs us:

“Quite a few readers had to rub their eyes and ask themselves where and when Pius X had inaugurated the reform in question. Dom Lambert, from that moment [1909], had laid his hand on the famous phrase [“active

participation”] in the *motu proprio*, which he would ceaselessly propagandize, and about which many disgruntled priests would openly say that he had drawn his Liturgical Movement from the *motu proprio* just as a conjuror produces a rabbit from a hat”. ⁸²

Fr Bouyer’s account of the criticism directed against Beauduin is entirely plausible. As we have seen in Chapter 3, Beauduin displayed a remarkable talent for prestidigitation. Like a magician who uses a real hat and a real rabbit, the better to produce an illusory effect, Beauduin was skilled in the art of presenting true situations and true doctrines, and producing a carefully contrived illusion by drawing erroneous conclusions from them. The sleight-of-hand was the key to his success in deceiving the faithful: most people would not be aware of the misdirection, especially when it was given by a man of the cloth whom they trusted implicitly.

Beauduin used his reputation as a priest with a “pastoral vision” to gain both credibility and active support from some bishops and priests throughout Europe and America. In the first instance, he gained the confidence of Cardinal Mercier, Archbishop of Malines, to grant him permission to speak at the Malines Congress in 1909; he also persuaded the Cardinal to use his influence in Rome in favour of the “Dialogue Mass” and experiments in “Ecumenism”.

He exerted a decisive influence on some notable Benedictines who became his ardent disciples and pioneers in the Liturgical Movement. Of special interest is Dom Virgil Michel (1890-1938) of St John’s Abbey, Minnesota, whom he had first met in 1924 at the College of Sant’Anselmo in Rome. It was Michel who translated and published his work, and launched the Liturgical Movement in America. Dom Bernard Botte (1883 – 1980) of Mont-César worked tirelessly to ensure that Beauduin’s ideas would be taken on board by the Commission which produced Vatican II’s Constitution of the Liturgy (1963) and by the *Consilium* which produced the *Novus Ordo* Mass (1969). Beauduin had many influential clerical friends in those early days, including Dom Bernard Capelle OSB and Fr Yves Congar OP. Among the members of the hierarchy whose friendship and support he enjoyed were Archbishop Angelo Roncalli (the future Pope John XXIII), and Mgr Harscouët, Bishop of Chartres.

As the urge for “Dialogue” and congregational singing came neither from Pius X, nor from the conservative clergy, nor from the faithful, only one

source remains: the liturgical saboteurs of the early 20th century who had been working under the protection of liberal bishops and would eventually manage to gain the ear of the popes.

The “Dialogue Mass” is launched

1909 marks the decisive moment when the worm of decay entered the liturgical scene and slowly began to eat away at the traditional rites from the inside. This was, as we have seen, the year in which Beauduin presented his ideas for “active” lay participation in the liturgy at the Malines Congress.

His address was entitled *La Vraie Prière de l'Église* (The True Prayer of the Church), and was published as *La Piété de l'Église* in 1914. ⁸³ In it, he proposed a “pastoral” plan for what he claimed were Pope Pius X’s directives for “active participation”. He mentioned in his lecture, among other things, his plan to familiarize the laity with the text of the Mass and Divine Office through the widespread use of bi-lingual hand missals. The idea behind the proposal was, so he averred, to fulfil Pope Pius X’s aim to help lay people achieve a greater degree of participation in the liturgy as the “primary and indispensable source of the Christian spirit”.

“All shall have Missals”

But there was a great deal more behind the innocuous-sounding strategy. Already a major revolution had been gathering momentum in his mind, and the 1909 Congress was only the first platform for views he had been elaborating for some time.

At the top of his agenda at the Congress was a proposal to publish and disseminate thousands of Missals with vernacular translations, not in order for the faithful to read silently as an option to follow the prayers of the Mass, but so as to make the “Dialogue Mass” the norm for all. “Let us change the routine and monotonous assistance at acts of worship into an active and intelligent participation; let us teach the faithful to pray and confess these truths in a body”, ⁸⁴ Beauduin announced.

He admitted to wanting to deprive Catholics of their traditional method of participation by eliminating all forms of private prayers which they recited silently during the Mass. (These would include the Rosary, devotional

exercises or even meditations). He stated that “all the faithful will be made to give up saying their private prayers during the divine services”. ⁸⁵

The choice of words reveals the totalitarian nature of Beauduin’s reformist plans. It is abundantly clear that he envisaged a system of oligarchic control over the liturgical life of the faithful, which would deprive them of the freedom to pray otherwise than all together and out loud. The undoubted benefits of individual silent meditation and the contribution this can make to the inner spiritual life of the faithful at Mass did not figure at all in his mind. Instead, participation was to be measured solely in terms of the number of decibels raised by the “active” participants in the pews.

And to exacerbate an already unacceptable situation, he implied that the faithful had no right to pray privately during Mass by suggesting that they were usurpers: he stated that “the liturgy occupies an incomparably higher place which the exercises [of devotion] cannot usurp”. ⁸⁶

This was one of the many occasions when Beauduin deployed his skill in the art of using loaded language to produce an emotional reaction in his audience or readers. No one wants to be considered a usurper. His reference to devotions carries an air of disapproval not only for the devotions themselves, but also for the faithful who practise them. This strategy, however, was based on nothing other than his own highly subjective notions of lay participation. In other words, Beauduin wanted collective verbal responses to be the medium of lay participation. Strictly “liturgical prayer” would be *de rigueur* for the faithful.

His excuse was that he wanted to foster a “community spirit” among all members of the Church, but this was basically an assault on their freedom to pray as individuals in their own way – a freedom later vindicated by Pius XII in 1947 (*Mediator Dei* §108). The same Pope censured those “who are deceived under the pretext of restoring the liturgy or who idly claim that only liturgical rites are of any real value and dignity” (*ibid.* §176), and he also rejected as “wrong and dangerous” any attempt on the part of the reformers to reduce exercises of popular piety to the methods and norms of liturgical rites (*ibid.* §184).

Significantly, there was no popular demand from the laity for “active participation” or desire on their part to be invested with clerical roles. The “Dialogue Mass”, which aids such an inversion of roles, was just the visible tip of an iceberg of “active participation”, the enormity of which was hidden under the waves in Pope Pius X’s time.

Zero tolerance for silent participation

It is important not to underestimate the seriousness of the proposal to make the “Dialogue Mass” the *sine qua non* of participation for all the faithful. A millennial custom of silent prayer that flowed from the faith and practice of generations of Catholics would soon be abolished, sacrificed on the altar of a destructive egalitarianism in which everyone’s “active participation” – whether clerical or lay – is treated as of equal value.

It was a totalitarian measure in which the individual is sacrificed to the collective. The faithful, exhorted to join in the collective vocal responses, would no longer be free to choose whichever method of silent participation works best for them.

Experience shows that, for those wishing to join their minds and hearts to the Holy Sacrifice being re-enacted on the altar, interior recollection can be distracted by the intrusive voices of others in the pews. Henceforth, wherever the “Dialogue Mass” took root, the atmosphere of Catholic worship in the Roman Rite would be forever changed as spoken responses drowned silent participation.

What is more, silent participation has become a sort of lightning rod for controversy. Indeed, it is now held to be an affront to democratic values in the “age of the laity” inaugurated by Vatican II. That explains why so many *Novus Ordo* priests who have imbibed Beauduin’s ideals react with a mixture of horror and outrage at the sight of any Catholic in the pews fingering a Rosary or reading from a devotional prayer book during Mass. Some even go as far as to hold them up to the general derision of the congregation.

Problems with the “Dialogue Mass”

In the first place, “Dialogue” between the priest and the congregation was never considered a *necessity* for fruitful lay participation in the Mass before the rise of the Liturgical Movement. In fact, a prominent and highly respected 19th century writer on liturgical ceremonial assures us that it was not even considered necessary for all the faithful to follow the priest’s words, let alone make any responses:

“It is not necessary that *all* the people understand and hear what is being read. It suffices that those near the altar can hear it”. [87](#)

It is evident that the Liturgical Movement, as conceived by Beauduin, was an attempt to both disparage and discourage methods of hearing Mass which are quintessentially Catholic and which cannot, for that reason, be found in other religions. As a result of the Movement's manifest capacity to desensitize priests and faithful to traditional values, few Catholics today, even among traditionalists, seem to grasp the broader significance of lay responses. It has never been Church teaching that the faithful have an absolute, *sui generis*, right to vocal engagement as a means of participating in the liturgy. In fact, Pope Pius X had never mentioned a "right" on the part of the laity in general to speak or sing during the ceremonies.

Yet under Beauduin's transforming pen, the exhortation of Pius X for participation in the liturgy – which did not specify any particular activity for the laity and certainly included attentive listening – became an unequivocal call to vocalization.

By artfully eliding the two concepts – participation and vocalization – Beauduin elevated the "Dialogue" form into an unimpeachable necessity, arguing (without any basis in Catholic tradition) that silence from the faithful indicated their isolation from the Church's public worship. He said that anyone praying in silence during the Mass is not associating himself with the prayer of the Church. He went on to heap personal abuse on devout Catholics, calling them "distant, isolated, solitary, alien, deficient, concerned only about themselves and lacking any concern for the common good, for edification or apostolate". [88](#)

Fuller than full?

Under Beauduin's influence, the members of Pius XII's Liturgical Commission came up with the novel idea that "active participation", and especially "Dialogue", produce a "fuller" (*plenior*) participation in the liturgy. That is what it said in the Instruction *De Musica Sacra* (1958). [89](#)

This expression, however, lands the reformers in a difficulty of interpretation which they are unable to resolve. For, "fuller" indicates a comparative increase over something not possessing the full quality of completeness – which was, in the reformers' eyes, the case with the silent participation of the faithful in the traditional Mass.

The corollary of this subjective judgement of the capacity of "Dialogue" to enable "fuller" participation demonstrates the weakness of the argument. If,

for example, we say that one glass is *fuller* than another, we are not talking about fullness *per se* but only an approximation to fullness. This necessarily means that one glass approaches nearer to fullness than the other – which, crucially, presupposes that neither glass is absolutely full. On this logic, no one can have achieved full participation in the past without “Dialogue”, which is demonstrably untrue, but that is what the reformers wanted us to believe. But then, by the same logic, no one could achieve the fullness of participation by means of the “Dialogue” either. (Here we can glimpse the illogical basis of §14 of Vatican II’s Constitution on the Liturgy which called for “full, active participation” in continuity with Pius XII’s reforms).

This reform was, of course, a purely gratuitous invention. Verbal responses are not required from the laity during Mass for their *full* participation. According to Catholic teaching, God’s grace is fully communicated by virtue of the words and actions of the priest, independently of any lay activity whatsoever, and this is effective for the faithful to the extent to which they are properly disposed to receive it. No one can deny that innumerable Catholics since the beginning of the Church have achieved their sanctification and salvation through full participation in the Mass and the Sacraments. So the idea of a “Dialogue” providing everyone with a heaven-sent means of fuller-than-full participation in the Mass is unsustainable.

Besides, there is no objective evidence that reciting aloud actually produces or increases interior participation for the laity. It can so often become a mechanical mouthing of words uttered on cue. As true participation in the Mass is interior, only God knows who among the “activists” in the pews is actually participating.

Beauduin, whose art of deception had begun with the “Dialogue Mass”, would go on to build further grand theories (“Ecumenism”, for instance) on similarly spurious foundations.

Beauduin’s “Sacrament of Dialogue”

A fundamental error in Beauduin’s promotion of “Dialogue” is that he promoted it as if it possessed the properties of a Sacrament, that is, as an outward sign of inward grace which works by making present the effect it signifies. He evidently believed that lay “active participation” worked in this way. When the people proclaim the words of the Mass together, he averred, the following effects occur within them:

“[T]his way of doing the liturgy will imperceptibly awaken a slumbering faith and will, by prayer and action, revivify the latent energies of baptized souls, so that ‘the true Christian spirit will flourish again and will be kept alive among the faithful’ (Pius X)”. ⁹⁰

But the predicted outcome is not guaranteed by the wagging of tongues and vibration of vocal cords. To believe that lay people can produce supernatural effects through their performance of the liturgy is a superstition. We must note Beauduin’s tactic of including a quote from Pius X’s *motu proprio* to lend credibility to his theory. However, as was demonstrated in Chapters 1 and 2, there is no evidence that the Pope adhered to the notion that *vocalization* on the part of the laity engendered or even facilitated their true participation in the liturgy.

The basis for Beauduin’s insistence on the “Dialogue” form of Mass can be traced to his misconception of the Church’s *lex orandi* (law of prayer): like many of his *Novus Ordo* heirs, he saw the Mass as a fraternal get-together and believed that the aim of the parish liturgy was mobilization of the faithful around the priest for a social apostolate. ⁹¹ In this way, he replaced the transcendent aims of the liturgy mentioned by Pope Pius X with his own subjectivity and bias. Beauduin’s idea of “active participation” would thereafter set the tone for a “politically correct” liturgical reform which would eventually subvert the *lex orandi* as it had existed for centuries.

The “Dialogue Mass” is a misnomer

The fact that some of the priest’s prayers require a response does not indicate a *verbal role* for the laity. Of course, members of the congregation may follow the responses in their missal. But these prayers are meant to be alternated between the priest and the ministers at the altar – or, in the case of a sung Mass, the choir who likewise exercise a clerical role, as Pope Pius X had explained. Thus no role was envisaged for the congregation to sing or speak during the Mass. Even the altar boys perform their tasks only by indult and are attired in choir dress as a sign that they are substituting, out of necessity, for clerics in the sanctuary, not for the laity in the pews.

As even the most unlettered pre-Vatican II Catholic knew, in the Mass the priest directs his prayers to God on their behalf, whether they were present at the ceremony or not. The power of the ritual to convey this impression

was evident in the traditional rite without any need for further explanation. When, for example, the priest turns to the people with the words “*Dominus vobiscum*”, he is instructed in the rubrics to do so with downcast eyes. This is so as to avoid the impression that he is talking to a particular group of people who happen to be present at the Mass, and expecting a verbal response from them. The response is duly given by the server or the choir on behalf of the whole Church.

A powerful disincentive for “Dialogue” was the sacred atmosphere in which the Mass was conducted by the priest. This was evidenced by a fervent belief in the Real Presence, strict adherence to the rubrics, the Church’s own liturgical language used by the ministers at the altar, the chanting of the choir, the silence of the congregation and the fact that the priest faces the symbolic East for most of the time, and not the congregation. The ability of the ritual to evoke the presence of the Divine and facilitate an encounter with God was fully realized in the traditional Mass, making any form of “active participation” by the laity redundant and intrusive.

The point about the Eastward-facing direction of the priest, incidentally, poses a conundrum for most modern Catholics, especially when attending the traditional Mass: they are genuinely mystified as to why the priest has his back turned to them when, in their estimation, he is supposed to be talking to them. Beauduin misrepresented the role of the priest in the Mass when he stated: “The priest talks to the people, and it is the people, rather than the altar boy, who ought to make the responses”. ⁹² The message contained in this statement is that the Mass is a two-way conversation between priest and people. We should not underestimate the magnitude of this error or the threat it poses to a Catholic conception of the Mass and, consequently, to a proper understanding of the ordained priesthood.

Spoken “Dialogue” a historical novelty

At various times throughout history, there were a few sporadic attempts by Church leaders and reformist groups to encourage the laity to say the responses aloud to the priest’s prayers during Mass, but none met with universal success. When the 20th-century reformers tried to introduce “Dialogue”, they found it an uphill struggle, as the people in the pews were firmly entrenched in their custom of silent participation. They had to be browbeaten into compliance by Church authorities, sometimes with harsh

and abusive words such as being called “dumb and idle spectators”, “individualistic” worshippers lacking in “intelligent participation”, and told that they were failing in their duty by not answering the responses aloud.

Some modern commentators try to prove that the “Dialogue Mass” was historically the normal method of lay participation by pointing to certain Missals of previous centuries which contained instructions for the laity to recite the responses. But this is inconclusive.

Here we must keep in mind a known historical fact that, under the influence of Jansenism and Gallicanism, some 17th and 18th century French dioceses published their own Missals independently of the Holy See, in which the compilers issued instructions for the congregation to make certain responses. But this does not, however, prove that the people did, in fact, make any responses or, if so, how many in a given congregation or to what extent throughout France. In the diocese of Meaux, for example, a Missal was published in 1709 in which the people’s responses were designated by the sign *℟* printed in red. But there was such a general outcry against it that the Bishop, Thiard de Bissy (Bossuet’s immediate successor), ordered the rubrics to be removed from the Missal. ⁹³

III effects of the “Dialogue Mass” form

The first and most fundamental problem of giving active roles to the laity in the Mass is that it is a powerful contributory factor in obscuring the unique role of the celebrating priest who performs a sacred office by reason of his ordination. Spoken “Dialogue” – in which everyone constantly pitches in with his or her vocal contribution to the liturgy – inevitably alters the perception that the priest is set apart to perform a sacred action. This has been a contributory factor in the *vulgarization* (in both senses of the word) of the liturgy, so that the sacred atmosphere is lost. When the congregation also says parts of the Mass aloud together with the priest or in response to his prayers, it blurs the essential distinction between the clerical and lay states. Hence, the impression is given that lay people share responsibility with the priest for saying the Mass.

We do not, of course, include here the responses of the lay servers or the singing of the lay members of the choir, as they perform their respective offices out of necessity where there is an inadequate supply of clergy. They are, furthermore, distinguished from the congregation by the requirement to

wear clerical dress. So there is no danger that the rest of the laity might consider themselves entitled to make vocal responses during the liturgy.

So far, we have considered the impact of the “Dialogue Mass” on perceptions of the ordained priesthood. Now we will turn to its effects on lay participation in the liturgy which was normally silent and contemplative before the introduction of “Dialogue”.

The Congregation of Rites made several responses to questions by bishops on the “Dialogue Mass” in 1921 and 1922 in which it was acknowledged that it can be a source of distraction not only for the priest, but also for the laity. On 4 August 1922, it stated:

“Things that are in themselves licit are not always expedient, owing to the difficulties which may easily arise, as in this case, especially on account of the disturbances which the priests who celebrate and the people who assist may experience, to the disadvantage of the sacred Action and of the rubrics. Hence, it is expedient to retain the common usage, as we have several times replied in similar cases”. ⁹⁴

Commenting on the Congregation’s document, Beauduin admitted that the practice of the “Dialogue Mass” ran counter to Catholic tradition. ⁹⁵ Therefore he urged his followers to adopt stealth tactics and to treat the subject only “with reserve, behind closed doors and in select reviews” (*avec réserve, à huis-clos, dans des revues très spéciales*), ⁹⁶ for fear of drawing disapproval from Rome. But if Pope Pius X had really recommended “active participation” for all, where is the need to pursue a covert operation in order to have it implemented?

Besides, the faithful did not need an official organ of the Roman Curia to tell them that the “Dialogue” form is an intrusion that radically changes the whole ethos and atmosphere of the Mass.

- For those trying to follow the prayers of the Mass silently and at their own pace in their Missals, keeping up with the general flow of vocal responses from the rest of the congregation is a definite challenge;
- for others trying to pray in their own way, the continuous bombardment of sound from people close by projecting their voices forcefully in the pews can disturb their meditation;
- experience also shows that “Dialogue” tends to encourage an atmosphere of competitiveness in which some people feel compelled to prove who can respond the loudest, thus creating a kind of “decibel auction”;

- “Dialogue” also creates a two-tier system between those who can give the Latin responses correctly and those who cannot. Indeed, it is not uncommon for participants to garble the Latin phrases, which means that the “Dialogue Mass” gives them the opportunity – which they would not otherwise have – to talk meaningless nonsense without, of course, realizing it;
- there is the common problem, unavoidable in most cases, of a rag-tag set of responses uttered at different rates of speed by the congregation: over-enthusiastic participants start responding even before the priest has finished speaking, while the stragglers insist on proclaiming “their part” after everyone else has fallen silent. This verbal melee is unbecoming in the liturgy.
- And yet there is no feasible way to “train” the laity as a whole and to continually monitor the loudness, speed and strict timing of their responses without being oppressive. Common sense dictates that the whole idea is unworkable where congregations composed of people with diverse backgrounds and abilities are involved.

Pius XII’s Instruction *De Musica Sacra* (AAS 50, 1958, §23, p. 639), mentions that the “active participation” of the faithful needs to be regulated (*oportet moderari*) so that the danger of any abuse may be removed (“*ut periculum cuiusvis abusus amoveatur*”), but suggests no measures for achieving that aim. That would, indeed, have made interesting reading. So the bottom line of the reform is that, having dispensed with the custom of silent participation, which needed no monitoring or intrusive action from officialdom, the Holy See had no realistic or practical solution to the problem of regimenting the world’s Catholics to “dialogue” in a manner fitted to the dignity of the liturgy.

Liturgical rubrics do not apply to the laity in the pews

At any rate, the idea of a requirement for the laity to be subject to rubrics intended to stipulate what they must say and do in the liturgy is fatuous. This is because, as Fr Adrian Fortescue pointed out in 1920, “lay people in the body of the church...enjoy a natural liberty” precisely because of their lay status, and also because the rubrics apply only to “those who assist more officially, the server, clergy, others in choir, and so on”. [97](#)

The Movement started by Beauduin to pressure the laity into “active participation” and “Dialogue” with the priest constitutes an infringement of their “natural liberty”, *qua* lay people, to assist at Mass in silent prayer and to be free to choose their own methods of spiritual participation. After all,

this had been the default position for the laity since the early centuries of the liturgy.

Showing respect for this time-honoured tradition would avoid the unnecessary tension and confrontation which often arises over this issue between priests who favour the “Dialogue” form and members of the congregation who prefer to pray silently at Mass. Even worse, where a priest finds “Dialogue” unacceptable, certain members of the congregation who insist on their “right” to give the responses at Mass can appeal over his head to the local bishop in whose diocese he has given his permission for it, thus giving rise to a spirit of contention in the parish over a matter of immemorial tradition.

Silence, they say, is golden. As for today’s proponents of the “Dialogue” method, a period of unlimited silence from that quarter would indeed be golden.

In the following chapters, we will be looking at ways in which Popes Pius XI and Pius XII gave an increasing degree of official impetus to the revolutionary idea of “active participation” including, specifically, the “Dialogue Mass”. Following Beauduin’s lead, they officially endorsed and validated this progressive position by providing approval and direction for its implementation in the Church.

5. PIUS XI'S PROGRESSIVE LEGISLATION

The background of resistance to Pius X's *motu proprio*

After the publication of Pope Pius X's *motu proprio*, there was a great deal of support around the world for the formation of choirs to sing Gregorian chant in the liturgy, but there were also pockets of resistance, especially to the prohibition of women in the ecclesiastical choir. The primary concern of the Liturgical Movement was the promotion of "active participation" of everyone in the liturgy.

The American bishops had been campaigning for congregational singing for decades before the official start of the Liturgical Movement in an attempt to accustom lay people to sing parts of the liturgy. ⁹⁸

Also in the United States, Virgil Michel's *Orate Fratres*, founded in 1927, furthered Beauduin's aims for involving the laity in spoken and sung responses. The renowned musical educator and choral conductor, Justine Ward, a wealthy benefactress to the Church, organized the 1920 International Congress on Gregorian Chant at St Patrick's Cathedral in New York. "What she wants above all", wrote Dom Gatard OSB, Prior of Farnborough Abbey who was at the Congress, "is to put the faithful, all the faithful, in the position to participate actively, as much as possible...in the liturgy and in the chant of the Catholic Church". ⁹⁹ She especially encouraged girls' choirs. ¹⁰⁰ In a private audience in 1924, Pope Pius XI gave her work his Apostolic blessing. ¹⁰¹

Reactions against the ban on female members of the choir ranged from indifference to outright defiance. In 1904, the American bishops, led by Cardinal Gibbons, ¹⁰² refused to implement Pius X's ban on women choir members on the grounds that it would cause too much resentment and be impossible to implement. ¹⁰³

An article in the *Baltimore Sun* in 1907 declared that the prohibition would be "impracticable". Its author mentioned that "Cardinal Gibbon is loath to do away with women in the church choirs, as he says that it interrupts the

harmony of the music, especially in a country like this, where there is little male talent to be relied on”. [104](#) Excuses were made that not enough boys could be found (though no record of efforts to find them was mentioned) and that their training would be too costly for the parishes.

Justine Ward, who refused to be dictated to in musical matters by any pope, stamped her foot and said:

“We have always sung as at present; these tunes have been sung by our fathers before us, and we like them; we have always played the organ during Advent and Lent; we have always listened to the singing of arias by a solo voice, usually female; we have always omitted the Proper of the Day at High Mass; all these things and others of like nature are a custom of long standing, and we will not tolerate any newfangled notions in this church”. [105](#)

A more complete collection of liturgical abuses tolerated by some of the American bishops which flew in the face of Pope Pius X’s *motu proprio* could hardly be imagined.

Requests continued to pour into the Vatican throughout the reign of Pope Pius XI for the use of the “Dialogue Mass”. The Congregation of Rites responded in private letters to the Bishops of Mantua (18 Feb. 1921); Pesaro, Italy, (25 Feb. 1921); Malines (27 April 1921); unnamed (4 Aug. 1922); and Genoa (30 November 1935), to say that lay responses in the liturgy are considered “not expedient”, that the custom of silent participation should be respected, and that the issue is for the local bishops to decide. [106](#)

The Apostolic Constitution *Divini Cultus* (1928)

It was against the background of this onslaught that Pope Pius XI published his 1928 document on Sacred Music in an attempt to conciliate hostile opposition and open the field of Sacred Music to more liberal attitudes.

In it, Pope Pius XI exhorted the congregation to participate actively in the liturgy:

“In order that the faithful may more actively participate in divine worship, let them be made once more to sing the Gregorian Chant, so far as it belongs to them to take part in it”.

In its Latin version, the word *actuosius* (more actively) is used in connection with the participation of the people. It was a remarkable innovation as it was the first time in the history of the Church that such a term was used in an official Latin document to describe the laity's participation in the liturgy. To reinforce the point, Pius XI specified whose voices should be heard in the church: "the voices of the clergy, the choir and the **congregation**". [emphasis added] Thus, he included the laity in the same category as the clergy who were in duty bound to sing the liturgy.

It also marks a distinct break with Catholic Tradition. In his *motu proprio* Pius X did not allot a role for the congregation to sing Gregorian Chant or even suggested that "it **belongs** to them to take part in it". On the contrary, he had said the opposite – that, apart from what is sung by the celebrant and his ministers at the altar, "all the rest of the liturgical chant **belongs** to the Choir". [107](#) [emphases added]

Another source of confusion in *Divini Cultus* is the following statement:

"It is most important that when the faithful assist at the sacred ceremonies, or when pious sodalities take part with the clergy in a procession...they should sing alternately with the clergy or the choir...whether in the language of the Liturgy or in the vernacular".

In this passage, where the congregation is actually instructed to sing the responses, confusion reigns between liturgical and non-liturgical situations. Pius X had made a crucial distinction between ceremonies which take place *inside* the church and religious events which take place *outside* the church, such as processions, pilgrimages etc. In the former case, singing is a strictly liturgical function reserved for the clergy and choir; in the latter, all the faithful were permitted to sing hymns in any language. [108](#)

Behind-the-scenes lobbying

What is not always appreciated about *Divini Cultus* is the fact that, prior to its publication, a robust lobbying operation had been going on in the Vatican to achieve the goal of "active participation" in the liturgy. Pius XI admitted that he was being influenced by lobbyists: "We are thus acceding to the requests which... have been made to Us" by "not a few bishops" and various "musical congresses".

This shows that the Progressivist foxes were already sniffing around the Vatican hen house, waiting for a pope to lift the latch. No names of the

bishops are mentioned in the document, but we gather from their episcopal sees that Beauduin's protector, Cardinal Mercier of Malines, was one of them. As an ardent supporter of Beauduin's Movement, Cardinal Mercier had, according to his biographer, "made every possible effort to introduce the practice of congregational singing into his diocese" long before *Divini Cultus* was published. ¹⁰⁹ So, as far as "active participation" is concerned, it was not exactly the Church speaking, but a handful of agenda-driven enthusiasts clamouring for policy changes who had gained the ear of the Pope.

In fact, the American bishops had already prevailed upon the Congregation of Rites to modify Pius X's restrictions on who could sing Gregorian Chant in the liturgy. In 1908, the Congregation of Rites received a request from New York on behalf of almost all the bishops of the United States and issued a Decree granting them permission for female choir members to perform outside the sanctuary. Unfortunately, this concession was bound to cause confusion by introducing a principle of relativism into the nature of a Church choir. If the women's choir could sing the responses to the male choir, and even perform the singing in their absence (as the 1908 Decree stipulated), the impression is given that there is no practical distinction between them.

With Pius X seeming to waver on this issue and give in to pressure, the significance and force of his 1903 legislation were greatly undermined and left open to contempt by his successors and by the world's bishops. This was an outcome that he had wished to avoid; in the Conclusion to his *motu proprio*, he had urged all who were in charge of choirs, particularly the diocesan bishops, to observe his instructions "so that the authority of the Church, which herself has repeatedly proposed them, and now inculcates them, may not fall into contempt".

Whereas Pius X had ordered that liturgical chant should be taught to seminarians and clerics and restricted to their use, Pius XI now extended this instruction to the whole Catholic population, starting in the schools. To this end, he told heads of religious communities of women as well as men to "devote particular attention to the achievement of this purpose in the various educational institutions committed to their care".

It was a subtle concession to recalcitrant bishops around the world. Predictably, such a radical step which reverses the traditional position

would lead to a divisive situation with bishops everywhere taking the part of Pius XI against Pius X and leading the faithful to do likewise.

The Australian wrangle

There is an interesting historical account of two Australian Archbishops at the turn of the 20th century who were at loggerheads with each other over the correct interpretation of Pope Pius X's *motu proprio*, and managed to turn their respective dioceses into a liturgical battleground. Even before 1903, Archbishop John O'Reily of Adelaide had started a national campaign for the promotion of Sacred Music strictly in accordance with Pope Pius X's principles, but the Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal Patrick Moran, was determined to resist the papal command and continue pandering to popular taste in music. [110](#)

Moran contended that the *motu proprio* applied only to the Church in older, established countries, and was not binding in missionary areas such as Australia. As a result, the liturgy in his Archdiocese was awash with the type of music expressly reprobated by Pius X. As an example of the type of singing chosen by Moran for the solemn High Mass celebrated in St Mary's Cathedral at the Australasian Catholic Congress held in Sydney in 1909, a female soloist sang an aria which would have been considered by Pius X as unsuitable for Catholic worship. [111](#)

The outcome of the dispute between the two prelates reflects unfavourably on the policy of Pope Pius XI towards recalcitrant bishops. When Archbishop O'Reily's representative lodged a formal complaint against Cardinal Moran to the Secretary of State, Cardinal Merry Del Val, in Rome, his letter was deliberately sidelined and left unanswered. [112](#)

Silent participation is stigmatized and becomes taboo

Everyone in the ambit of the present-day *Novus Ordo* regime has by now accepted that silent participation in the liturgy is to be utterly eschewed. But that idea did not originate with Pope Pius X. It all started with Beaudoine's launching of the Liturgical Movement and was officially enshrined for the first time in a papal document by Pius XI who indicated in *Divini Cultus* his desire for vocal participation by all:

“it will no longer happen that the people either make no answer at all to the public prayers – whether in the language of the Liturgy or in the vernacular – or at best utter the responses in a low and subdued manner”.

A disturbing feature of this remark is its emphasis on both externalism and intolerance. No one can claim that the act of singing or speaking promotes their participation. Nor can it be established with any certainty that participation will be enhanced by raising the decibel level of vocal responses from the laity. Pope Pius X, for his part, had never made such claims.

“Detached and silent spectators”

Its origin can be traced to Beauduin’s ill-conceived theories for “active participation”. These were dredged up by Pius XI and called in evidence to refuse countenance to Catholics wishing to pray silently during Mass – whom he termed “detached and silent spectators”. The Pope’s choice of words was perhaps more revealing than he intended: Beauduin had expressed the selfsame idea in 1922, using the pejorative French phrase “*spectateurs passifs, assistants muets*” (dumb and idle spectators). [113](#)

These words display a disregard for the crucial distinction between detachment and silence. Both are conflated in *Divini Cultus* and given equally negative publicity, an opprobrium that also attaches to Catholics who choose not to make their voices heard during Mass. Henceforth they would be fed to the liturgical lions to be harried, mocked, rebuked, cajoled, placed under suspicion, publicly denounced and sent on a guilt trip to make them sing/shout up during Mass.

The patterns of thought regarding “active participation” which would eventually subvert the Church’s liturgy were already present in the mind of Pope Pius XI when he attempted to rid the Church of the traditional method of silent participation. The logical outcome of his intolerance in this regard would be the tyranny of the *Novus Ordo* regime: Paul VI stated ominously in a General Audience on 26 November 1969 that the New Mass was “intended to interest each one of those present, to draw them out of their customary personal devotions or their usual torpor”. [114](#) He went so far as to forbid the silent praying of private prayers, including the Rosary, during Mass:

“There are those who, without wholesome liturgical and pastoral criteria, mix practices of piety and liturgical acts in hybrid celebrations. It sometimes happens that novenas or similar practices of piety are inserted into the very celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. This creates the danger that the Lord’s Memorial Rite, instead of being the culmination of the meeting of the Christian community, becomes the occasion, as it were, for devotional practices. For those who act in this way we wish to recall the rule laid down by the Council prescribing that exercises of piety should be harmonized with the liturgy not merged into it...**it is a mistake to recite the Rosary during the celebration of the liturgy**, though unfortunately this practice still persists here and there”. [115](#) [emphasis added]

Now that things have come into the open, we can see what had been hidden from us in the years preceding Vatican II and where it has led.

The beginning of the end of papal protection for liturgical tradition

With his support for congregational singing and responses in *Divini Cultus*, Pope Pius XI produced a landmark mandate for change which corresponded neither with the *lex orandi* of the Roman rite nor with the requirements, interests or desires of the Catholic faithful who had been worshipping in silence for centuries.

Pius XI is reported to have publicly celebrated the “Dialogue Mass” himself in 1922 and 1925, and to have encouraged individuals and groups who were consciously advancing the liturgical revolution. [116](#) It is not surprising, therefore, that by the late 1920s, liturgical experimentation was already well under way on the continent of Europe, especially in some Benedictine Abbeys, in the German-speaking lands [117](#) as well as in parts of America. This involved “Dialogue Mass”, Mass facing the people, vernacular responses, congregational singing, Offertory procession, handshaking etc., all of which went into the melting pot to emerge as a ready-made template for a “democratized” liturgy.

So, by the time Pius XI issued *Divini Cultus* in 1928, the vague expression “active participation” had a circumscribed meaning among the reformers but was unknown among the mass of ordinary Catholics who had never asked for it. This suggests that the spirit which hovered over Pius XI when he recommended “active participation” was akin to the spirit of Beauduin

which eventually gave rise to a new perception of the Church and the priesthood.

Back to the sources: ressourcement

A sizeable section of *Divini Cultus* is devoted to the standard propaganda employed by the reformers about congregational singing in the early history of the Church. In proposing “active participation” Pius XI was certainly influenced by the Modernists’ search for a “more authentic” form of participation predicated on the belief that the congregational singing of the early Christian era was the original and therefore the true method for the laity to follow. He listened to the advice of the reformers who believed that the Church’s *lex orandi* had been defective for centuries and had deprived the laity of their true participation in it.

The underlying assumption is that after 14 centuries of idle watching and listening, it was only in the 20th century that the Catholic congregation was restored to its “rightful” role of singing and speaking in the liturgy. Implicit in this vision was an attack on what the reformers called “devotionalism” – but which was in reality the venerable practice of private, mental prayer made by the faithful during Mass – deemed to have sullied the purity of the original Christian liturgy.

Thus, “active participation”, understood as an attempt to retrieve a lost primitive ideal, has a utopian and ideological edge to it. Because it was the brainchild of liturgists, historians and politically motivated parties interested in advancing their respective careers, it could hardly be called a truly pastoral reform.

Now we can see the background of Pius XI’s unworthy rebuke to the faithful who were praying silently at Mass as “detached and silent spectators”: unlike his sainted predecessor, he had allowed himself to be influenced by the Modernists’ preference for a return to the sources of Christian liturgy (known technically as *ressourcement*).

The new concept of the Church as that “of the people”

Pope Pius X had taught that the singing of the liturgy was a function of the sacerdotal office i.e. a prerogative of the ordained ministers of the altar and the choir of Levites. Pius XI, on the contrary, presented it as the right and

duty of all the baptized, whether clerical or lay. In these two approaches – the former strictly clerical, the latter open and “democratic” – we find an echo of the types of liturgies characteristic of two opposing religions: Catholicism and Protestantism. One cannot help drawing the inference that such a revolutionary move on the part of Pius XI echoes their doctrinal conflicts as well. As the 16th-century Protestant reformers rejected the Catholic priesthood, their congregational singing was among the most efficient agencies in carrying this principle to the minds of the people. It can be regarded as the liturgical expression of principles common to Protestantism and embodied in Lutheranism and Calvinism alike.

One wonders, therefore, what place such a practice might be thought to have in a Catholic liturgy codified by order of the Council of Trent, until the realization dawns that congregational singing was the *sine qua non* of the Liturgical Movement initiated by Beauduin for the purposes of promoting Ecumenism.

Presaging Vatican II

Of particular note is the work of Fr Romano Guardini who promoted “active participation” in the 1920s at Burg Rothenfels, where he lived in community with members of the German youth movement. [118](#) His link with Vatican II has been noted by Karl Rahner:

“It is a widely known fact that the Rothenfels experience was the immediate model for the liturgical reforms of Vatican II”. [119](#)

We cannot overlook the fact that Pius XI’s promotion of “active participation” has had a significant bearing on the direction of the liturgical revolution, and has been one element in facilitating the confusion between clerical and lay roles that would later afflict the Church. He could have suppressed the burgeoning movement, but instead of nipping it in the bud, he allowed the ever-expanding revolution to continue on its nefarious course.

Imprecise language breeds dangerous policies

The problem with using imprecise language in official documents is that it can be used to confer wider and more arbitrary powers on commissions and regulatory bodies that employ it – which is how Episcopal Conferences could so easily implement “active participation” after Vatican II. The

unfortunate result, as the dismal history of liturgical reform has shown, was that the faithful were no longer protected from the arbitrary power of bishops to impose on them their own agenda of “active participation”.

The phrase became a powerful tool with which to later demolish the Catholic bastions they hated: not just “devotionalism” but the unique status of the priest, the “rubricism” of the Tridentine Mass and the whole system of Scholasticism. Unless these essentials were guaranteed by papal authority, nothing of the original Church would be left standing: indeed, it could not be otherwise.

If we scratch the surface of *Divini Cultus*, we can see a quiet revolution taking place to “open up” the liturgy to popular involvement. It also shows a growing contempt for the strictures imposed by Pius X on women choir members. We can conclude, therefore, that *Divini Cultus*, with its emphasis on an “active participation” which was far from universal or traditional, can be said to have made a vital contribution to the emergence of Progressivism in the liturgical domain.

6. PIUS XII: A VACILLATING POPE

By the time Pius XII was elected Pope in 1939, neo-Modernism had already begun to re-establish itself in the Church with the rise of the “New Theology” and to make itself manifest in the liturgy – the place where the ordinary Catholic comes regularly into touch with the Faith. We have seen how the slogan “active participation” has become the watchword for liturgical reform and has acted as a catalyst to change the face of Catholic worship. But the real revolt was not superficial: it was aimed at changing the fundamentals of the Faith itself, especially the doctrine of the Eucharist and the priesthood.

The slogan also raises deeper questions. How has it been so easy for the reformers to change the way Catholics have been participating in the Mass for centuries? How have they been allowed to alter the fundamentals of the Faith as expressed in the Tridentine liturgy? The answer lies in the fact that it was the popes themselves who personally promoted “active participation” of the laity, first tentatively and then in increasingly stronger doses. In this way, they advanced the agenda of the reformers and effectively undermined the objections of the faithful.

Pius XII tried to solve the problem by taking both sides of the dispute.

- He prophesied about the “suicide of altering the Faith in the Church’s liturgy” [120](#) but appointed Fr Annibale Bugnini as its “gravedigger” when he fatally made him Secretary of the Commission for Liturgical Reform in 1948; [121](#)
- he condemned the abuses of the Liturgical Movement in *Mediator Dei* in 1947, but by 1956, having allowed the same (and worse) abuses to metastasize throughout the Church, he declared that “the liturgical movement has appeared as a sign of God’s providential dispositions for the present day, as a movement of the Holy Spirit in His Church”; [122](#)
- he upheld the necessity of Latin in the liturgy in *Mediator Dei*, but the authorized use of the vernacular increased considerably during his pontificate in many countries;
- he taught that interior participation in the liturgy is of primary importance, but placed emphasis on the “activity” of the laity as the best means to achieve participation;
- he showed sensitivity to the faithful who preferred to pray silently at Mass, but indicated that their preference was not worthy of respect by promoting the “Dialogue Mass” for the *whole* congregation. [123](#)

It is evident from this brief sketch that for Pius XII the liturgy had two faces, the traditional (sacred) and the modern (worldly), now differentiated, now enigmatically confused in *Mediator Dei*. This explains how the message it contained was capable of being filtered through various prisms, with the result that the Pope is hailed by conservatives as a defender of Tradition and by reformers as a friend of *aggiornamento* or adapting the liturgy to the demands of the modern world. In keeping with this dual vision, the liturgy became the battleground where these two antagonistic forces confronted each other and fought for hegemony in the Church.

Whether this duality was a product of the Pope’s mind or whether it reflected the pressures he was under from the massive, co-ordinated actions of the Liturgical Movement, we do not know. But because of his vacillation and refusal to fly the Catholic flag in a recognizable manner, he left himself open to the suspicion that he may have been attracted by the “adaptations” which he pretended to censure. While recognizing that the Liturgical Movement could produce harmful effects, he nevertheless gave it his blessing and stated his desire to assist it forward. [124](#)

But perhaps the greatest boost he gave to the reformers was his recognition of their efforts as a “movement” within the Church (*Mediator*

Dei § 4). Mgr Bugnini saw this as a major strategic coup: “In his encyclical *Mediator Dei* of November 11 1947, Pius XII put the seal of his supreme authority on this movement, which by now was to be found everywhere in the Church”. ¹²⁵ In this sense, the encyclical can be said to have applied not so much the bridle as a rather sharp spur to the Liturgical Movement in the lead up to Vatican II.

But what clinches the Pope’s willing complicity in the Liturgical Movement is the fact that prior to *Mediator Dei* he had already set in motion plans for a select group of liturgical specialists to initiate plans for a general reform of the liturgy. Bugnini informs us that in an audience with Archbishop Alfonso Carinci, Secretary of the Congregation of Rites in July 1946, Pius XII decided that “a special commission of experts should reflect on the general reform of the liturgy and offer concrete proposals”. ¹²⁶

The rise of a bureaucratic elite who steered the liturgical renewal

Having first surrounded himself with a Praetorian Guard ¹²⁷ of scholars and experts, Pius XII established the Pontifical Commission for the General Reform of the Liturgy in 1946, and two years later stacked it with a majority of “progressivists”. These included:

- Cardinal Clemente Micara – an ongoing protector since 1946 of serial predator Marcial Maciel – as President;
- Fr (later Archbishop) Bugnini – a man of exceptional talent as an administrator and organizer of Committees – as Secretary;
- Fr (later Cardinal) Antonelli – co-responsible with Bugnini for bringing the *Novus Ordo* liturgy into being – as General Director;
- Fr (later Cardinal) Bea, Pius XII’s confessor, who had helped draft *Mediator Dei* and would play a major role in “Ecumenism” at Vatican II;
- Mgr. (later Cardinal) Dante, Papal Master of Ceremonies from 1947-67;
- Fr Joseph Löw who would work with Fr Antonelli to change the Easter Vigil in 1951 and Holy Week ceremonies in 1955.

With this Commission, Pius XII created a new class of liturgical specialists and entrusted them with key offices, carrying great power and influence, which allowed them to become the dominant force in the Liturgical Movement. The fundamental contradiction inherent in his policy is that *Mediator Dei* was hijacked within a few years by the type of reformers he seemed to think he was opposing.

Fr Bugnini and the “Bossarelli Case”

Fr Bugnini CM was a priest of the Congregation of the Mission, an Order founded by St Vincent de Paul (hence the epithet Vincentian) to preach the Gospel to the poor, as its motto, “*evangelizare pauperibus*”, indicates. In 1947, a scandal arose in the residence where Bugnini and his co-worker, Fr Francesco Bossarelli CM lived in Rome at the church of San Silvestro Al Quirinale which belonged to the Congregation of the Mission. Bugnini and Bossarelli had been close collaborators, running the Order’s affairs at San Silvestro and editing its missionary publications, *Edizioni Liturgiche e Missionarie*.

Records from the Vincentian archives show that in 1947 Bugnini was Secretary ¹²⁸ of the Order’s Provincial Council in Rome, ¹²⁹ and was in charge of its administrative affairs when millions of dollars of Vatican funds went missing. A special Commission set up by Pius XII found that Fr Francesco Bossarelli “and his associates” were guilty of embezzling \$2,000,000, belonging to the Vatican, in “black market financial dealings”. ¹³⁰ (Shades of Sindona and the P2 Masonic Lodge). The Provincial Superior at San Silvestro was dismissed by the Holy See for covering up the affair. But it is likely that Bugnini must also have had confidential knowledge of these criminal activities, which makes it difficult to see how he could have emerged from the affair with clean hands.

Hiding behind a shield of secrecy

Unknown to Pius XII, Bugnini had been making clandestine visits to the *Centre de Pastorale Liturgique* (CPL), a liturgical “think tank” characterized by ideological commitment to the most *avant garde* reforms, which organized National Weeks for priests. Inaugurated in Paris in 1943 on the private initiative of two Dominican priests ¹³¹ under the presidency of Lambert Beauduin, it was a magnet for all who considered themselves in

the vanguard of the Liturgical Movement. Its Conference Centre would play host to some of the most famous names who influenced the direction of Vatican II: Frs Beauduin, Guardini, Congar, Chenu, Daniélou, Gy, von Balthasar, de Lubac, Boyer, Gelineau etc. It could therefore be considered as the confluence of all the forces of Progressivism, which saved and re-established the Modernism condemned by Pope Pius X in *Pascendi*.

According to its co-founder and director, Fr Pie Duployé OP, Bugnini had requested a “discreet” invitation to attend a *CPL* study week held near Chartres in September 1946:

“I had a visit from an Italian Lazarist ¹³², Fr. Bugnini, who had asked me to obtain an invitation for him... During our return journey to Paris, as the train was passing along the Swiss Lake at Versailles, he said to me: ‘I admire what you are doing, but the greatest service I can render you is never to say a word in Rome about all that I have just heard’”. ¹³³

Much more was involved here than the issue of secrecy. The person who was working behind the scenes to promote the interests of the reformers would return to Rome to be appointed by the Pope to an administrative position on his Commission for the General Reform of the Liturgy.

The plot thickens

But there is evidence that Pius XII may have known and approved of the *CPL*. Mgr Montini, the acting Secretary of State ¹³⁴ and future Paul VI, sent a telegram ¹³⁵ to the Editor of the *CPL*’s Publishing House dated 3 January 1947, conveying the Pope’s Apostolic blessing together with “his personal best wishes”.

What is certain is that Bugnini could not have been appointed as Secretary of the 1948 Commission without Montini’s intervention with Pius XII, as it was the Secretary of State who, in the normal course of Vatican affairs, had the greatest say in forwarding names for papal appointments.

Sow Bugnini, reap corruption

As history has shown, appointing Bugnini as Secretary of the liturgical Commission was the equivalent of placing Dracula in charge of the blood bank. He aimed to suck the liturgy dry of its quintessentially Catholic

elements, but before achieving that objective he first had to destroy “the hegemony of the Congregation of Rites”. [136](#)

This Congregation had been founded by Pope Sixtus V in 1588 to safeguard the uniformity of the Roman Rite. As such it was an obstacle to Bugnini’s plans for reform. He complained that “[f]or centuries the Church willed that all worship in the Roman Rite should everywhere show perfect uniformity”. [137](#) Soon it would be reduced to a tin pot army incapable of defending the realm of the Church’s worship against his policy of “inculturation”. Pius XII aided its demise by appointing Bugnini in 1956 as one of its Consultors. Then it would be abolished by Paul VI in 1969.

The hermeneutic of “Bugninity”

One of the most objectionable characteristics of Bugnini was his capacity for deception. He claimed repeatedly that he was carrying out the wishes of Pope Pius X and following the tradition of the Council of Trent in overhauling the liturgy. [138](#) His self-declared aim was to return the liturgy of the Roman Rite from a “dark age” of unintelligibility to “worship in spirit and truth” in which all could actively participate. [139](#)

This agenda was set out as early as 1949 in the *Ephemerides Liturgicae*, a leading Roman review on liturgical studies of which Bugnini was Editor from 1944-65. First, he denigrated the traditional liturgy as a dilapidated building (“*un vecchio edificio*”) which should be condemned because it was in danger of falling to pieces (“*sgretolarsi*”) and therefore beyond repair. Then he criticized it for its alleged “deficiencies, incongruities and difficulties” which would prevent it from appealing to modern sensibilities. The “difficulties” he envisaged were references to “negative” aspects of reality such as punishment for sin, Divine anger, damnation, eternal punishment etc. He stated that a general reform would save the Church’s liturgy from the “*sterilità*” (sterility) and the “*archeologismo*” (outdatedness) of Tradition. [140](#)

It is difficult to understand how, in the same year that he published this anti-Catholic diatribe, he was made a Professor of Liturgy in Rome’s *Propaganda Fide* (Propagation of the Faith) University. [141](#)

His solution was to return to the simplicity of early Christian liturgies and jettison all subsequent developments, including traditional devotions. [142](#) These ideas expressed in 1949 would form the foundational principles of

Vatican II's *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. For all practical purposes, the Roman Rite was dead in the water many years before it was officially buried by Paul VI.

Sovereignty without power

We will next consider ways in which Pope Pius XII's handling of liturgical reformers minimized papal authority and favoured the growth of what later became known as "collegiality" or the autonomy of national Episcopal Conferences.

Soon after he became Pope, Pius XII had to face a United Front of German bishops who were adamant about promoting liturgical abuses in defiance of ecclesiastical law. Numerous examples were already flourishing unchecked in their dioceses, fuelled by the subversive efforts of progressive liturgists and theologians from the German-speaking lands: notably Abbot Herwegen and Dom Odo Casel of the Benedictine Abbey Maria Laach, and Frs Augustin Bea, Romano Guardini, Karl Rahner, Joseph Jungmann and Pius Parsch. In spite of the reigning liturgical anarchy, the German Episcopal Conference, headed by Cardinal Bertram, took the Liturgical Movement under its wing in 1940 and created its own Liturgical Commission which operated independently from the Holy See.

To form an idea of how far the mutinous German bishops had plunged their dioceses into liturgical chaos, we can consult the 1943 Memorandum ¹⁴³ written by Archbishop Conrad Gröber of Freiburg which he addressed to the German and Austrian bishops and also to the Curia. Archbishop Gröber had broken ranks with his confreres in the Episcopal Conference and vehemently denounced the radical innovations in doctrine and liturgy practised by the reformers. He was voicing the complaints of many German Catholics who objected to liturgical changes in their parishes.

In his Memorandum he showed how the Liturgical Movement was a showcase for liturgical corruption directly related to the adoption of Protestant principles, which created a lethally divisive culture of schism within the clergy. These included the following:

- presenting the essence of the Mass as a meal;
-

exaggerating the priesthood of the laity and promoting the notion that “it is the community which celebrates”;

- disparaging the ministerial priesthood and reducing the role of the priest to one delegated by the parish to preside at Mass;
- rejecting private Masses and devotional prayers (the Rosary, Stations, etc);
- extending the limits of the Church to include Protestants, considering heretical sects as part of the Church;
- redefining the Faith as no longer belief in revealed truths, but as an experience and emotion.

It is noteworthy, though not surprising, that all the doctrinal deviations he mentioned as prevalent in 1942 were an exact replica of those which influenced the creation of the *Novus Ordo* of 1969. After all, many of the key figures of the Liturgical Movement would be later promoted as *periti* (“experts”) at Vatican II.

As for the liturgical abuses, we shall concern ourselves with one of the most egregious – the singing of hymns in the vernacular during High Mass, which was a long-standing custom in Germany. According to Archbishop Gröber, the German bishops insisted on vocal participation of the congregation – even to the point of making it obligatory – and the use of German in the Mass. The fact that use of the vernacular in solemn liturgical functions had been expressly prohibited by both Popes Leo XIII and Pius X and confirmed in Canon Law [144](#) was completely ignored. Even though the Holy See, since the Council of Trent, reserved to itself the right of legislation in the domain of the liturgy, orders from Rome were regarded by the German bishops as an intolerable intrusion of papal legislation and a threat to their supposed autonomy.

Pope Pius XII hoisted the white flag

In 1943, the following demands were made to the Holy See by Cardinal Bertram, on behalf of the German bishops:

- approval for the Mass to be sung by the congregation in the vernacular;
- a new and simpler Latin Psalter for the Breviary;
-

extensive use of the vernacular in the Ritual (for use in the Sacraments, blessings, exorcisms etc.);

- celebration of the Easter Vigil ceremonies in the evening.

Pius XII must have been aware that these abuses were already in vogue in Germany, as in addition to Archbishop Gröber's analysis, strong objections had been published by conservative priests representing the concerns of the laity. [145](#)

Feelings ran high on both sides of the divide. On the instructions of Cardinal Innitzer of Austria, Karl Rahner, then in Vienna, wrote a 53-page letter of protest to Archbishop Gröber, a copy of which was sent to all the German and Austrian bishops. [146](#)

Fr Romano Guardini also attempted to counter Archbishop Gröber's criticism of the Liturgical Movement in a letter to Bishop Stohr of Mainz [147](#) who was head of the German Liturgical Commission. This organization had been set up in 1940 independently of the Holy See. It provided a vehicle for communication among the leading members of the German Liturgical Movement and a common front against attacks on the Movement.

In spite of opposition from more traditional quarters, Cardinal Bertram hoped to put pressure on Pope Pius XII to authorize these reforms, and, as events have shown, his hopes were not entirely forlorn.

He received an immediate reply from the Vatican permitting the High Mass (*Deutsches Hochamt*) to be sung in German by the congregation. So what had been illicitly done in defiance of Canon Law up to 1943 was suddenly transformed into an approved practice. It was the same principle under which Pope Paul VI would capitulate to pressure for Communion in the hand, Mass facing the people, laicization of priests etc: regulations were being widely flouted, so why bother trying to maintain the rules?

As for the other demands, the following concessions were readily made:

- the Holy See approved the "Dialogue Mass" (*Gemeinschafts-messe*) and left the vernacularized "Community Mass" (*Betsingmesse*) to the discretion of the German bishops;
- a German-language Ritual was approved;
- Fr Augustin Bea was appointed to oversee the production of a new, non-traditional Psalter which Pius XII personally approved in 1945.

The reform of the Easter Vigil would soon be granted: the traditional ceremonies were drastically curtailed and an opportunity for “active participation” was provided by a complete innovation, the “Renewal of Baptismal Promises” recited in the vernacular.

Fr Bea’s liturgical experiment

In 1945, Pope Pius XII approved for use in the Divine Office a new Latin version of the Psalms, the work of a committee of experts at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome under the direction of Fr Bea SJ. The committee made a complete break with tradition by discarding the biblical and liturgical Latin which had been used in the Church since early Christian times. In its place they used a form of Classical Latin borrowed from the humanistic tradition of the ancient Romans which had a different connotation. Even its rhythm was unfit for Catholic purposes as it could not be easily sung to Gregorian Chant. This innovation introduced by Pius XII could not be regarded as an example of the “hermeneutic of continuity”. Rather we should call it the “Bea-tification” of the Psalter.

This did not, however, satisfy the German bishops. At the request of the German Episcopal Conference, Fr Romano Guardini produced a new Psalter in the vernacular (*Deutscher Psalter*) in 1950.

Pius XII sides with reformers against traditionalists

The year 1943 will go down in history as the moment in which the Church at last gave in to the *Zeitgeist* or spirit of Progressivism that had been threatening to engulf her since Pius X’s time. The German bishops were demanding the freedom to “do their own thing”. And so the authority of the Roman Pontiff and the sacredness of the traditional liturgy had to be set aside to accommodate a changing and worldly liturgy that would enshrine the Cult of Man. Let us not forget about the impact of the Pope’s concessions on the traditionally-minded Catholics of Germany: the already disappearing rug was pulled from under their feet as they found themselves disavowed by their Holy Father.

Fishing in dangerous waters

The whole enterprise was an ecclesiastical disaster in the making. The Pope tried to control the German Episcopal Conference by reprimanding liturgical abuses and imposing shambolic restrictions, conditions and experimental periods. But the German bishops tossed them all aside to indulge in unlimited freedom to regulate their own liturgies.

It is obvious that the gestures made by the Pope against dissident reformers, while tolerating their abuses, was totally illogical: the message was fatally mixed. If infringing upon Canon Law and disobeying papal commands can be so easily tolerated in Germany, why should progressivists elsewhere be targeted for papal criticism? And if using the vernacular in the German-speaking lands was widely permitted, why should the inhabitants of other nations be prevented from using their own languages in the liturgy?

Even though Latin remained “officially” the language of the liturgy, the situation quickly descended into farcical chaos. There followed a concerted effort in the 1940s to storm the Vatican. Overwhelmed with requests from many countries, Pius XII increased permission for the use of the vernacular in the liturgy. ¹⁴⁸ For those who decided to short-circuit the system and not bother to ask permission, no action would be taken against them for breaking the law. The same scenario would be repeated after Vatican II with permission for altar girls, Communion under both kinds etc. when Popes rewarded disobedience and encouraged contempt of ecclesiastical law.

A French and German pincer movement: Pius XII under siege

The 1940s were also a time when national hierarchies – particularly the French and German – were rallying their combined forces to mount an all-out assault on Roman control of liturgy. It may seem to some people surprising or a trifle hyperbolic that the language of battle should be employed to characterize the situation, but it cannot be denied that the pre-Vatican II reformers saw their mission in these terms. One of Dom Beauduin’s companions in arms, Fr Pie Duployé, stated in 1951 after attending the First International Liturgical Week at the German Benedictine Abbey of Maria Laach:

“If they knew in Rome that Paris and Trier [the centres of the French and German reformist movements] were marching together, that would be the end of the hegemony of the Congregation of Rites”. ¹⁴⁹

These are certainly fighting words, revealing the intention of the Liturgical Movement to wrest control of the liturgy from the Holy See, yet they were not matched by any joint action or correspondingly militant spirit of opposition from the Vatican. There was no-one there to fight the battles that needed to be fought. Faced with mounting pressure from the leaders of various liturgical cabals, Pius XII would blow an “uncertain trumpet” ¹⁵⁰ in *Mediator Dei* and follow a policy of appeasement.

7. PIUS XII – THE APPEASEMENT PROCESS

Feeding the German crocodile

The British statesman, Sir Winston Churchill, once famously remarked with reference to the German Chancellor that appeasement is tantamount to feeding a crocodile in the hope that it will eat you last.

All the evidence gleaned from the history of the liturgy in the 1940s indicates that papal authority was in ignominious retreat before the aggression of the German liturgists whose goals lay far beyond the limits of any reasonable accommodation. The seriousness of the German bishops' 1943 challenge can be seen as the first of a series of challenges, each one of which carried with it an extra nail in the coffin of Catholic Tradition, culminating in the reforms of Vatican II. For what they were contemplating were changes in the millennial rites, starting with the Easter Vigil, to adapt them to the spirit of modern times. The loss of Latin and the destruction of the treasury of sacred music were also part and parcel of the whole plan. Dom Beaudoïn's plans (See Chapter 3) were well on the way to gaining official recognition in the Church.

Confronted with an increasingly menacing international situation of anti-Roman hostility and wishing to avoid open conflict, Pope Pius XII adopted a conciliatory approach to the demands of liturgical reformers. His message to the German Episcopal Conference in 1943 was tantamount to saying: continue breaking liturgical law and the Holy See will reward you with its prize of papal approval.

It must be admitted that an overwhelming preponderance of evidence pointed to the futility of appeasement well before this date. With the rise of the Liturgical Movement in the Benedictine Abbey of Maria Laach in Germany in 1914, and the pioneering work of Fr Pius Parsch in Austria in 1918, liturgical anarchy and ecumenical contacts were flourishing with impunity in the German-speaking lands. No amount of concessionary favours from the Holy See could have assuaged the hunger of the beast of reform: the German crocodile was not content with a few scraps thrown in its direction. As everyone knows, crocodilians are predators with insatiable appetites.

***Mediator Dei*: a compromise document**

A careful reading shows that *Mediator Dei* (1947) is a “political” document which takes both sides of the debate, so that reformers and traditionalists can find support for their point of view and argue endlessly over which side best represents the thinking of the Pope. It is true that Pius XII reprimanded various liturgical abuses, but in the same document he also gave the reformers room to move, to make progress on their agenda of “active participation”. Most dismayingly of all for traditionalists, he praised the party of reform and demonstrated his commitment to the Liturgical Movement with these words:

“The movement owed its rise to commendable private initiative and more particularly to the zealous and persistent labour of several monasteries within the distinguished Order of St Benedict”. [151](#) And “We derive no little satisfaction from the wholesome results of the movement just described”. [152](#)

Misplaced praise for a misbegotten movement

But was the outcome really so splendid, and were the liturgical leaders so admirable? To answer yes would be historically inaccurate and intellectually incoherent.

By 1947, the new breed of Biblical scholars, theologians and liturgists had been engaged in liturgical experimentation on their own initiative for decades. They had also succeeded, largely unmolested by ecclesiastical hierarchy, in propagating their revolutionary agenda in books, reviews, lectures, liturgical centres, study weeks and conferences.

And it was from the Benedictine monasteries that these “new ideas” first spread to country after country around the world, with the towering figure of Dom Lambert Beauduin presiding over the movement like a brooding colossus. [153](#)

Pius XII seemed to be suggesting that the Liturgical Movement, purged of its abuses, was praiseworthy. That is the same argument used today in relation to the *Novus Ordo*. But there could be no good outcomes, no “wholesome results” from reforms that were not rooted in the faith and tradition of the Church.

Besides, it is only the merest fancy that there existed a liturgical “movement” before Beauduin appeared on the scene to claim that he was fulfilling the aims of Pope Pius X. Wherever the Catholic faith flourished, this was due to sound catechesis and the correct spirit and practice of the liturgy as taught by Pope Pius X, who never considered himself part of anyone’s “movement”.

If we join the dots, the full picture emerges

There is a general reluctance among traditionalists to acknowledge that the liturgical reforms of Pius XII are part of a continuum from the inception of the Liturgical Movement in 1909 at the Benedictine Abbey of Mont-César to the creation of the *Novus Ordo* 60 years later. Yet these were the words of Paul VI when he promulgated the New Mass on April 3, 1969:

“It was felt necessary to revise and enrich the formulae of the Roman Missal. The first stage of such a reform was the work of Our Predecessor Pius XII with the reform of the Easter Vigil and the rites of Holy Week, which constituted the first step in the adaptation of the Roman Missal to the contemporary way of thinking”. [154](#)

It is not without significance that a future Abbot Primate of the Benedictine Order, Dom Rembert Weakland, who inherited the *avant-garde* ideas of Beauduin’s Liturgical Movement, would be one of Paul VI’s personal consultants with regard to the *Novus Ordo*. [155](#) In his Memoirs, Weakland explained how he was a protégé of Bugnini who assured him of Pope Paul’s high regard for him. This demonstrates that the official reforms of Pius XII, no less than those of Paul VI, were tarred with the same brush, tainted from their Benedictine sources. It follows that Pacelli and Montini must bear the

ultimate responsibility – each in his own way – for the unprecedented changes to the Roman Rite that they signed into law.

Pius XII allowed liturgical anarchy to reign

In the early part of the 20th century, unauthorized liturgical experimentation was conducted in secret, among a select few, in the crypt of Maria Laach Abbey, at monastic retreats, in university chaplaincies and societies of youth groups, among soldiers on active duty during World War I, on seafaring missions or among radical groups such as the Catholic Worker. Subversive ideas were spread in samizdat publications distributed from hand to hand or by word of mouth in small-scale conferences held behind closed doors. However, by 1940, the movement gradually spread into parishes with the open or tacit approval of bishops around the world who were won over in increasing numbers to the “new ideas”.

But what about Pius XII’s criticisms in *Mediator Dei* of liturgical abuses and the faulty theology that inspired them? As these mildly expressed rebukes did not reveal a resolve to deal appropriately with the offenders (who either ignored or denied them), they were taken to be a display of weakness – as if to say the Church did not take too seriously her own liturgical laws. *Mediator Dei* thus sent a clear signal of supine capitulation and, further, an invitation to side-step the system. (Bugnini would later boast that the incredible success of the reformers vindicated the adage that “Fortune favours the brave”). [156](#)

The ease with which the reformers could get away with breaking the law was a huge incentive behind the Liturgical Movement. In the absence of tough-minded measures against the dissidents, it became clear to them that the possibility of a far more drastic reform of the liturgy was being opened up under Pius XII than had hitherto been dreamed of. In fact, the 10 years following *Mediator Dei* saw the Pope steadily succumbing to their demands and entrenching some of their reforms in the Church’s liturgy. They would soon gain everything they had been fighting for, and much more besides, after Vatican II.

It was Pius XII’s profound ambivalence that made effective control of the Liturgical Movement impossible. Whose side was he really on? Opposing factions claimed victory. But the claim for the traditionalist party rang hollow when they found themselves abandoned to the tender mercies of

Bugnini who was given an influential position on the 1948 Commission for the General Reform of the Liturgy by none other than Pius XII himself.

Before dealing with the actual changes to the Holy Week liturgy in 1955 (which were many and significant) under Pius XII, we will take a look at the guiding principles of the 1948 Commission for the General Reform of the Liturgy and the manner in which its Secretary, Bugnini, went about his task of organizing the destruction of the Church's most ancient and venerable ceremonies.

Secrecy paramount, ethics thrown to the winds

Bugnini's penchant for secrecy informed all his actions. As we have seen, he had been making clandestine visits to the *Centre de Pastorale Liturgique* since 1946, the year in which Pius XII requested Cardinal Salotti, the Prefect of the Congregation of Rites, to begin forming a project for the general reform of the liturgy. Bugnini himself stated that his Commission met "in absolute secrecy". He transmitted selective information via Fr Bea and Mgr Montini "up the back stairs", so to speak, to the Pope during the latter's illness, kept the Sacred Congregation of Rites in the dark and sprang the first of the Holy Week reforms on the unsuspecting faithful in 1951.

In fact, so secret was the work of the Commission that Bugnini admitted that "the publication of the *Renewed Order for Holy Saturday* at the beginning of March 1951 caught even the officials of the Congregation of Rites by surprise". ¹⁵⁷ The reason for his astonishing candour was, unfortunately, that he regarded his scheming not as something of which to be ashamed, but to boast about.

If even the Congregation knew nothing of the projected Easter Vigil reform until it was formally proclaimed, one wonders at the integrity of Cardinal Micara who was simultaneously President of Bugnini's Commission and Pro-Prefect of the Congregation of Rites. In fact, it was Micara who signed the Decree publishing the new Order of Holy Saturday. ¹⁵⁸ This raises the question of collusion with Bugnini, and whether the Easter Vigil reform had been, as it were, stitched up between them. Where would that leave Pius XII in whose name the reform was issued? It is, however, no secret that Bugnini, not the Pope, was in permanent control of the Commission.

"I am the liturgical reform!"

These words of inflated self-esteem were attributed to Bugnini by a close colleague. ¹⁵⁹ Whether or not Bugnini actually said them, he had no difficulty in fulfilling this absolutist role. His ability to create ecclesiastical policy in secret and have it later imposed on the universal Church is more akin to what we would expect of a totalitarian state.

It is also an example of the corrupting power handed to him by Pius XII. Without such papal backing, the work of the Commission would have ground to a halt. However, having the power of the Pope behind it, Bugnini's Commission became an end in itself, unchallengeable and unquestionable, the ultimate bureaucratic weapon against all objectors. It would grow into a global, powerful and unaccountable industry forcing the world's bishops, willy nilly, to toe the Bugnini line.

Divisive reforms

It is not generally appreciated just how controversial the 1951-55 Holy Week reforms were in their day. Historical records exist to show that they were vehemently criticized by many bishops, priests and lay people on account of the radical nature of the changes then initiated.

Among the most outspoken critics was Mgr Léon Gromier, a distinguished Prelate of the papal household and a Canon of St Peter's Basilica. As a consultant to the Congregation of Rites since the time of Pope Pius X, and a respected author of works on liturgical ceremonial, he was in a position to speak with authority on the Holy Week ceremonies. His knowledge was legendary on all subjects liturgical from bugia to buskins and falbalas to faldstools, which made him the strongest of advocates for arguing the case for the traditional rites.

Mgr Gromier, who had been publicly criticizing the Liturgical Movement since 1936, gave a conference in Paris in 1960 ¹⁶⁰ in which he excoriated the 1955 Holy Week reforms, exposing the false liturgical science and the false reasoning behind them. He did not hesitate to describe them as an "act of vandalism", "an immense loss and an outrage to history", "the negation of reasoned principles" and the product of a "pastoral mentality impregnated with a populist attitude, unfavourable to the clergy". With reference to the liturgists who produced the reforms, he lamented that their "discretionary powers are vast, as are the abuses".

Objections from bishops ¹⁶¹ to the interim Holy Week changes of 1951 poured into the Vatican with requests to leave the traditional rites intact. The final and obligatory reform of 1955 was vigorously opposed by more bishops, for instance Cardinal Spellman of New York and Archbishop McQuaid of Dublin (on the grounds that it might destabilize the faith of the Irish people). ¹⁶²

Among the laity, the Catholic newspapers ¹⁶³ of 1955-6 were rife with objections from the faithful. The novelist, Evelyn Waugh, who had converted to Catholicism, considered the changes ruinous to his spiritual life and a danger to the faith itself, particularly among simple folk. ¹⁶⁴

No leeway for traditional rites

But, disregarding warnings about the consequences of changing long-established patterns of worship – that the new rites would endanger the habitual, ingrained attitudes to the faith of devout Catholics – Pius XII issued his new liturgical laws and instructions in *Maxima Redemptionis* in 1955, and made the traditional rites illegal:

“Those who follow the Roman rite are bound in the future to follow the Restored *Ordo* for Holy Week... This new *Ordo* must be followed...” ¹⁶⁵

A tragedy for traditionally-minded Bishops

Pius XII used legislation to introduce arbitrary and unnecessary changes devised by revolutionaries. This put the law-abiding bishops (who placed obedience to the Pope as their foremost duty) into an untenable position: they were thus manoeuvred into implementing the reforms that they objected to on grounds of the Faith. In other words, giving them no choice but to comply, he pressured them to act against their principles and their conscience.

And because *Maxima Redemptionis* legitimated the actions of dissident clergy who had been implementing the reforms without the Pope’s authority for decades, it was a document fundamentally biased against the traditional rites.

The suppression and distortion of inconvenient facts

Naturally, no mention was made in the Decree of the many bishops who considered the reforms to be pastorally unsound. The claim that the Holy Week reforms were attended by “the greatest success everywhere” is highly tendentious; ¹⁶⁶ as such, it has no place in an ecclesiastical Decree intended to bind the faithful. Yet it was used to silence objections not only from traditionally-minded bishops but also from those Catholics who were attached to their traditions and had never requested or welcomed such changes.

In short, the 1955 Holy Week reform, whatever the degree of Pius XII’s complicity in it, was a papally-backed mechanism for re-ordering the liturgy to incorporate the basic wishes of the reformers and to begin implementing their ideas for future changes. That is how the will of Bugnini’s Commission triumphed – and thus inescapably stifled opposition.

A common thread

With *Mediator Dei* of 1947, Pius XII had set the stage for “active participation” of the laity. Not only did he strongly encourage the “Dialogue Mass” and congregational singing in this encyclical, but he also exhorted the Bishops to set up diocesan committees to ensure that these revolutionary measures “in which the people take part in the liturgy” would be everywhere promoted as a “liturgical apostolate”. ¹⁶⁷

Here we see the first intimation of the “theology of lay liturgical ministry” which would be later developed at Vatican II, whereby the whole assembly shares the responsibility for celebrating Mass. Thus, Pius XII effectively undermined his own teaching on the Catholic priesthood found elsewhere in the same document. With such confusion between the ordained and the non-ordained, is there any wonder that there developed a crisis of priestly identity?

Soon after issuing the encyclical, Pius XII appointed Fr Bugnini to his Commission for the General Reform of the Liturgy which was staffed by a few hand-picked progressive satraps. ¹⁶⁸ The first result of the Commission’s work was the restructuring of the Easter Vigil rite (1951) with a view to promoting “active participation” leading to an entire revision of the Holy Week liturgy in 1955. This in turn would spawn all the subsequent liturgical reforms up to and after Vatican II, with the same rationale in mind.

There was no doubt in the minds of the two most influential members of the Commission, Frs Bugnini and Antonelli, that the reforms they devised in the 1950s were based on the same principles as the post-conciliar reforms. Bugnini made several statements to the effect that the 1955 reforms were a transitional stage of a more general liturgical reform, “the first step toward measures of a wider scope”, “an arrow” pointing forward. ¹⁶⁹ Fr Antonelli stated that his early attempts at revision of the Roman Rite under Pius XII were simply a “kind of novitiate” for the official reforms of Vatican II and later. ¹⁷⁰ He stated that the 1956 Holy Week reforms contained the “criteria which would inspire the future reform of the liturgy”. ¹⁷¹

When Bugnini’s chickens came home to roost

How ironic that Fr Antonelli, who had been given chief responsibility on Pius XII’s Commission for the reform of Holy Week, later deplored the outcome of what the Commission had initiated in the 1950s. In his memoirs, he noted:

“[M]any of those who have influenced the reform...and others, have no love, and no veneration of that which has been handed down to us. They begin by despising everything that is actually there. This negative mentality is unjust and pernicious... with this mentality they have only been able to demolish and not to restore”. ¹⁷²

Quite. But the metaphor of pots and kettles springs to mind, for Fr Antonelli was himself in the forefront of the Liturgical Commission’s work and did his share of wielding the demolition ball in the 1950s against the Holy Week rites. Yet at that critical point in history when papal support for the protection of the traditional rites was essential, Pius XII was on the wrong side, aligning himself with those who aimed to demolish Tradition.

8. EASTER VIGIL 1951 – STARTING GUN FOR THE HOLY WEEK REFORMS

At the First German National Liturgical Congress, in June 1950, organized by the Liturgical Institute of Trier, Fr Romano Guardini gave a presentation on the Easter Vigil which gave rise to the resolution that “the bishops be asked to petition Rome for the transfer of the Holy Saturday celebration to the evening or night”. This was followed up on 2 November 1950 when the Bishops of Germany, France, and Austria formally petitioned Pius XII to move the celebration of Holy Saturday to the evening. Their request was accepted and an experimental Vigil was inaugurated on 9 February 1951. With this concession from the Holy See, the Liturgical Movement was officially recognized as a change agent for the traditional Holy week ceremonies.

What was the rationale of the Holy Week reforms when, in the opinion of everyone else outside the Liturgical Movement, there was no obvious or compelling need for any change whatever? Bugnini later “explained” in his memoirs:

“The Liturgical Movement was an effort to unite rites and content, for its aim was to restore as fully as possible the expressiveness and sanctifying power of the liturgy and to bring the faithful back to full participation and understanding”. [173](#)

A circular argument

But this explains nothing except that the assumptions he started with determined the conclusions he came to. In other words, he already believed, like the Protestants, that the Catholic liturgy, as it had been handed down through the centuries, was essentially falsified and also dysfunctional. According to him, there was a mismatch between the ceremonies of the Roman Rite and the content which they were meant to represent. His “solution” – to adapt the liturgy in the direction of “active participation” so that people could understand it better – simply reinforced his preconceived

ideas about a supposed “ignorance and dark night of worship... out in the nave”. [174](#)

With this “explanation”, the cat was well and truly out of the bag. It was exactly the same rationalization put forward by the Commission which had produced the Decree *Maxima Redemptionis* in 1955. The main point of similarity between them was the undercurrent of hostility to Tradition discernible in both accounts, which is hardly surprising given that they were masterminded by the same set of reformers to the deliberate exclusion of traditionalist viewpoints.

A strange anomaly

It is noteworthy that those who happily condemn such an “explanation” coming directly from Bugnini are prepared to brush it aside or overlook it when it emanates from a Decree promulgated by Pius XII. That is because they have conferred on Pius XII the iconic status of the “last traditional Pope”, believing that he ensured the continuity of Tradition.

But the proof of continuity is fidelity to Tradition, and Pius XII authorized substantial changes including innovations in the Holy Week rites – all in the name of “active participation”. How could he have ensured continuity when he failed to make a full commitment to the liturgical tradition which is its only guarantee? Whatever the degree of Pius XII’s personal complicity in the reforms, it is unarguable that an arbitrary restructuring of the Church’s liturgy has always been alien to orthodox Catholic instinct and practice.

What possible justification could there be for changing the face of the Holy Week rites? When we examine the Decree *Maxima Redemptionis* we will see that its purpose was not to provide well-reasoned arguments for reform, but to convey an *attitude*. It positively bristled with loaded polemics that served to prejudice the faithful against their own traditions and to lock the Liturgical Movement into a negative attitude to the Church’s spiritual patrimony. Let us look at the rationalizations that were considered by Pius XII’s Commission to be worthy of special consideration and emphasis.

Tradition subjected to criticism, disparagement and even ridicule

The most popular argument put forward by the reformers in favour of changing the Easter Vigil was the alleged illogicality of lighting the Easter

fire and candle in daylight hours. How absurd, they scoffed, to be singing about the darkness of “this night” in broad daylight – as if the Church had committed a liturgical gaffe that had gone unnoticed for 13 centuries. And so the reformers sneered and sniggered at the age-old Easter Vigil, led on by the instigator of the Liturgical Movement, Dom Beauduin, who stated scathingly in 1951:

“How come that we have endured and accepted uncritically for centuries the practice of singing the *Exsultet* and the *Vere beata Nox* (“O truly blessed night”) in broad daylight? [175](#) He went on to add: “And how many other equally serious anomalies we now accept without batting an eyelid! Surely this must lead us to conclude that our liturgical consciousness is not sufficiently enlightened”?

Beauduin’s view was based on the assumption that all his predecessors in the priesthood were either oppressed by tyrannical Church leaders or were too dim-witted to think for themselves and, furthermore, that there was only one way to think – his way. It was also a view that came to dominate and distort the thinking of theologians and liturgists up to our times.

The radical theologian, Fr Herbert McCabe OP, echoed both Beauduin and *Maxima Redemptionis* when he opined: “Before the [1956] restoration ... ‘the Vigil’ was a very ramshackle affair and its meaning was badly obscured by the *preposterous* practice of celebrating it on Holy Saturday morning instead of at night”. [176](#) [emphasis added]

A benighted reform

But it was Beauduin and his fellow-reformers, not the followers of Tradition, who were the benighted ones. The central fallacy in Beauduin’s argument, which was enshrined in *Maxima Redemptionis*, was that midnight or at least sundown was the “proper” time to hold the Easter Vigil. But there is no rational sense to be found in the notion that the Church should imitate the example of the early Christians who held the Easter Vigil at midnight. Strong evidence exists to show that their worship meetings generally took place during the hours of darkness, not out of principle but out of caution, because they were living in an era of persecution. Having claimed to be following the superior path of enlightenment, Beauduin failed to see what was glaringly obvious to well instructed Catholics: that the

references to the “night” in the traditional Easter Vigil had a mystical rather than a naturalistic significance.

Let us listen to the following explanation of this point given by a Prelate who had never been indoctrinated in the Liturgical Movement’s ideology. With reference to the Easter Vigil, Cardinal Wiseman (1802-65), the first Archbishop of Westminster, stated that “the service speaks of the ‘night’; it is the night in which Israel escaped from Egypt, and which preceded the resurrection of Christ”. ¹⁷⁷ In other words, “night” was used in the Vigil texts in a pre-figurative sense, ¹⁷⁸ as a metaphor for the darkness of the world in the bondage of sin before the Redemption. It has no intrinsic connection with the time when the sun sinks below the horizon.

An incoherent reform

So the time of day when the Vigil takes place is irrelevant: as far as the celebration of the mysteries of salvation is concerned, it matters not a jot if the sky is dark or light. The point is not a trivial one. It follows that holding the Easter Vigil in daylight hours could not, as *Maxima Redemptionis* contended, be “detrimental to the liturgy’s meaning” or contribute to any loss of its “innate clarity”.

The irrationality of this claim becomes even more obvious when it is made the basis of legislation, as if the 1955 reforms were founded on solid and irrefutable arguments for the good of the Church. With *Maxima Redemptionis* the bishops of the world were told that they would be breaking the law if they continued the traditions of their predecessors. Even today, to celebrate the Easter Vigil in daylight is regarded as “reprehensible”. ¹⁷⁹ And although there is no rational reason to insist on a nocturnal celebration of the Vigil, those who favour the traditional practice are themselves relegated to outer darkness.

The essence of the problem with the Easter Vigil reform is that it was built on a series of fantasies, the first one being the inappropriateness of lighting the Easter fire and candle because the sun is shining. Alas, this was no joke: the framers of *Maxima Redemptionis* were perfectly serious in stipulating that the Vigil must be held in the dark on pain of losing its “innate clarity” and even its sanctifying power. This idea was the brainchild of the Liturgical Movement.

We will examine what the maverick liturgist Pius Parsch had to say on the subject. Let us keep in mind that he had been celebrating the Easter Vigil at midnight since 1936, contrary to the universal practice of the Roman Rite, and was overjoyed that Pius XII had put the official seal of approval on his dissident behaviour:

“It is a restoration that is in part due to our efforts... It is one of the great objectives of the Liturgical Movement to restore to the Catholic world the Easter Vigil service... The unliturgical spirit and mentality of the last centuries has deprived us of the holiest of all nights; the liturgical spirit of our day will correct this error”. [180](#)

There could hardly have been a clearer description of two positions developing alongside each other in the Church: on the one hand the bi-millennial liturgy of the Catholic Church inspired by the Holy Spirit, and on the other hand a rapidly increasing parallel universe, of very recent origin, populated by the members of the Liturgical Movement in self-declared opposition.

The aggressive implementation of the reforms

It is obvious that by 1955 the Liturgical Movement had overreached itself in trying to upstage the Holy Spirit and, as a result of its hubris, had turned itself into an ideology – and a coercive one at that. *Maxima Redemptionis* resulted in enforced compliance by bishops who were trying to hold the traditional line, and a victory for Bugnini and his Liturgical Commission. The injustice lies in the fact that here was a Commission with a highly radical and ideological concept of its role in the Church, pressuring Pius XII to make rulings which would be inimical to the interests and values of Catholic Tradition.

Creative pretexts for change

The other justifications for the Easter Vigil reform are hardly any more credible and deserve an equal amount of scepticism. *Maxima Redemptionis* tells us that attendance at all the Holy Week rites had been decreasing since the Middle Ages “especially because their celebration had long since been put back into the morning hours when, on weekdays, schools, businesses, and public affairs of all kinds were and are conducted everywhere”. It goes on to assert:

“In fact, common and almost universal experience teaches that these liturgical services of the sacred Triduum are often performed by the clergy with the body of the church nearly deserted”.

These claims are specious in the extreme and do not stand up to scrutiny. We will deal with each of them in turn. They were based on an interpretation of reports sent to the Holy See by the world’s bishops and heads of religious congregations in response to an international survey, the purpose of which was to garner opinion on the 1951 experimental Easter Vigil reforms.

Selectivity bias in the interpretation of the results

The first step in approaching the survey is to understand how the situation had been manipulated. According to *Maxima Redemptionis*, enthusiasm was reflected worldwide: “this experiment had the greatest success everywhere, as very many Ordinaries have reported to the Holy See”. But by then, the Liturgical Movement had succeeded in spreading its influence in various places throughout the Catholic world, with the result that there were some bishops in almost every country who welcomed a break with tradition. This is a very different situation from a “worldwide consensus”. The reformers ignored this distinction, and read too much into the data by interpreting random variation as representative of the general opinion among the bishops.

The pro-reform bishops were reported to have “generously praised the restored rite, told of the spiritual fruits derived from it, and asked that the permission to celebrate it be further extended”. ¹⁸¹ Well they would, of course, considering that they had been putting pressure on Pius XII for precisely those reforms. We can infer that the predicted outcome of the survey was a certainty for the reformers who had the Pope’s ear.

If further confirmation of this self-fulfilling prophecy is needed, the archives of the Diocese of Brentwood in the UK for 1951 record the responses of those priests who had elected to celebrate the new Vigil. All were in favour of the changes and some were wildly enthusiastic in their praise. But the fact that they had voluntarily taken this step suggests that they had progressivist tendencies from the start, and were predisposed in favour of the new Vigil. Their comments reveal that they had hobby-horses

of their own: they were already committed to the simplified rites in the vernacular and facing the people. [182](#)

Thus the international survey gave liturgical cranks, dissidents and radicals everywhere the opportunity to indulge their favourite pastime with permission from the Holy See. From this we can deduce that the only liturgical forms permissible would be those that the Commission judged suitable to contribute to the store of “active participation” of the laity.

But even more unethical was the cynical use of the unsuspecting faithful: they were the guinea pigs for the full-blown Holy Week changes that would be foisted on them a few years down the line.

But what about those bishops who sent in negative reports or who protested vehemently? Or those who declined to comment? No indication was given as to their number, which we know must have been considerable from the available evidence.

In some countries, the experimental Vigil was not adopted by the majority, for example in the US where it was very much the exception. The progressivist journal, *Worship*, successor to *Orate Fratres* and mouthpiece of the US Liturgical Movement, registered its disappointment at the lack of enthusiasm for the experimental Vigil among most bishops. [183](#)

However, the tradition-minded bishops were accorded no recognition or consideration: their views were trivialized and dismissed with a wave of the hand. The Congregation of Rites issued a document in January 1952 admitting that several bishops reported vague “difficulties and doubts” from parish priests about the experimental Vigil, but went on to say that “the Holy See would, by appropriate ordinances, settle the difficulties and resolve the doubts”. [184](#)

But bishops and priests who still continued to object were ignored. They had become the equivalent of Orwell’s “unpersons”, [185](#) found guilty of the “thoughtcrime” of opposing the “Bugnini project”. As far as *Maxima Redemptionis* was concerned, it was as if they did not exist. And ever since then, they have been denied a voice in the Church, their marginalization being used to create a false consensus.

Pius XII sided with the Commission against the traditional bishops

Pius XII ordered that the same Commission of liturgists which had prepared the rite of the 1951 Vigil should analyse the reports. ¹⁸⁶ And he would, as a matter of course, follow their recommendations. As there was no independent review of their work or any attempt at objectivity, the outcome was predetermined in favour of the Commission members who performed their task in the predictably biased manner we have seen above. Bugnini declared the new rite an instant success and described its reception as “an explosion of joy throughout the Church”. ¹⁸⁷

The general principle of the survey seemed to be that the conclusion came first and the data were cherry-picked to support and “explain” the desired result, i.e. the world’s bishops were in favour of the renewed Easter Vigil. This process, more commonly known as “spin”, or skewing the facts to fit a prejudice, raises the gravest possible doubts about the integrity of the Commission’s work. It was obvious from the moment of Bugnini’s appointment as Secretary of the Commission – if not before – that nothing or no-one, not even the Pope, must get in the way of the projected reforms. That is why Bugnini relied on bias, official manipulation of the statistics and suppression of inconvenient facts.

By counting the hits and ignoring the misses, so to speak, Bugnini and his henchmen arrived at conclusions that were not fully supported by the data. The result was a partial, over-simplistic and highly fanciful picture of the general opinion among the world’s bishops on the Easter Vigil ceremonies. Yet it was this self-serving interpretation which acted as the starting gun for the Holy Week reforms which would be imposed on the Church in 1955.

A “Potemkin façade”

But why was there was no external or independent evaluation to ensure an objective scrutiny of the results? Why was Mgr Gromier, for instance, not consulted? Pius XII could hardly have expected the Commission to act as a dispassionate evaluator of the evidence when he knew that the people running the survey had an obvious interest in a favourable outcome for the Liturgical Movement. This institutionalized conflict of interest should be called by its proper name: fraud.

The evidence so far indicates that this was a survey forged in a crucible of secrecy and deception. Like all Potemkin façades, ¹⁸⁸ it was designed solely to deceive others with an elaborate and impressive result and thus impress

the credulous. In this case, the survey was an attempt to beguile the reigning Pontiff into believing that all was well in the domain of the liturgical reform.

Spinning a false narrative

Maxima Redemptionis told us that attendance at all the Holy Week rites had been decreasing since the Middle Ages to the point where, by the 20th century, “common and almost universal experience teaches that these liturgical services of the sacred Triduum are often performed by the clergy with the body of the church nearly deserted”. It placed the blame for this alleged state of affairs on the Church’s scheduling of these services to the morning hours “when, on weekdays, schools, businesses and public affairs of all kinds were and are conducted everywhere”.

It is difficult to know where to start to evaluate the accuracy of these broad and sweeping generalizations encompassing not just centuries but the dizzying complexity of the myriad parishes all over the world.

The salient feature of the Liturgical Commission’s survey was its intentional lack of perspective. No allusion is made to the many historical variables that may have affected the levels of attendance at the Holy Week services since the Middle Ages, such as the effects of the Reformation, the French and Russian Revolutions, the two World Wars and the persecution of Catholics in various countries around the world. Whilst there are bound to be churches where the Easter Vigil was not well attended, this may have been due to any number of causes – for instance difficulty of access in remote areas, shortage of clergy, absence of apostolic zeal or even the effects of the Liturgical Movement itself. We are entitled, therefore, to ask: what percentage of the alleged diminution in attendance was due to the morning celebration of the Easter Vigil? The fact that other contributory factors were (intentionally) ignored means that the argument rests on shaky grounds.

An invented scenario too implausible to be true

If the opinion expressed in *Maxima Redemptionis* were true, we would have been constantly hearing from our pastors or reading in the Catholic papers about a momentous dearth of support for the Holy Week services. But, of course, there was no such situation.

Good Friday has long been a widely-held national holiday in most countries, and Maundy Thursday in several. As for Holy Saturday morning, it has been a longstanding custom that government offices and many businesses do not operate on Saturday, leaving many Catholics free to attend the morning Easter Vigil. In countries where it was customary for children to attend school on Saturday mornings – even in the unlikely event that this applied to Holy Saturday – it was within the remit of teachers in Catholic schools to accompany their charges to church services. While there would always be some people, no matter how the liturgy was arranged, who could not attend, most Catholics were free – or could arrange to be free – to do so.

But Bugnini did not need arguments that could be proven, only those that could not easily be disproved by his opponents. His tactic was to present incomplete, out of context and misleading information to the unsuspecting faithful who were in no position to judge its accuracy on a world-wide scale; they would have no means of identifying the mismatch between the assumption and the facts. Even if the claim happened to be true – and its veracity is far from established – it by no means follows that changing the Holy Week liturgy would increase attendance.

Up until 1955, there is ample reason to believe that the Holy Week services were well attended. Although few people are alive today to provide memories of the pre-1955 ceremonies, there is an alternative source of information: contemporary newspaper coverage.

Maxima Redemptionis disregarded the reality on the ground

All we have to do is search the archives of various Catholic newspapers dating from the late 19th to the mid-20th century or the Pathe newsreels to provide a reality check. These attest to the fact that Catholics flocked to the Holy Week services, including the Easter Vigil, in great numbers. Here are a few representative examples from the London area which could be applied to the situation in various countries around the world:

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1898: “The services at Farm Street [189](#) and at the Oratory [190](#) were also followed by dense throngs. Never does there seem to have been greater fervour in the churches during Holy Week in London”; [191](#)

- 1917: “The churches were crowded at **all** the Holy Week services until the dawn of the new Easter Day”; [emphasis added] [192](#)
- 1919: “At all the services the vast Cathedral [Westminster] was filled with attentive and devout congregations, and great numbers of the faithful received Holy Communion on Maundy Thursday and Easter Sunday”; [193](#)
- 1920: “Mass of the Presanctified was celebrated on Good Friday in the presence of a congregation which filled the Cathedral”; [194](#)
- 1920: “A commentary upon the sterling Catholicity of the working classes of South London is the fact that they attended in large numbers the services of Holy Week and Easter”; [195](#)
- 1920: “At the church of the English Martyrs [Streatham] on Good Friday, Dr Terry’s setting of the music was finely rendered by the voluntary choir, the conductor being Mr Collis, the organist, formerly of Westminster Cathedral. There was a crowded congregation throughout the day”. [196](#)

Even allowing for some exaggeration in media reports, none of these accounts comes anywhere near the description of almost deserted churches found in *Maxima Redemptionis*. Indeed, by one of those delicious ironies of which history is replete, Romano Guardini himself inadvertently revealed the nonsense in this claim. Having visited the Basilica of Monreale, Sicily, during Holy Week of 1929, he recorded how impressed he was that on Holy Thursday “the ample space was crowded” and attendance at the Easter Vigil service filled “almost every part of that great church”. [197](#)

Indeed, there are Catholics today in their late eighties and nineties who have vivid memories of churches in their areas which drew large congregations for the Easter Vigil and other Holy Week services before the 1956 reforms. But most Catholics today have become so desensitized to liturgical change that few would agree that there was anything shocking in the idea that the traditional Easter Vigil was “problematic”. As for the faithful who were flocking in great numbers to their Holy Saturday services before 1956, they would have had no inkling of the scale of the reform about to burst upon them, and were blithely unaware that their much-loved Easter Vigil was being threatened with extinction.

Irony heaped upon irony, ruin upon ruin

It was only in 1956 when *Maxima Redemptionis* came into force that disaffection with the new Holy Week rites set in among many of the faithful, especially those who were most attached to the traditional ceremonies. We have the word of the well-known Catholic novelist and convert, Evelyn Waugh, that this was so. Speaking on behalf of the English faithful who shared his negative views, he stated: “Many of the innovations, which many of us find so obnoxious, were introduced by Pius XII”. [198](#)

The result of this disaffection was that as soon as the novelty wore off, attendance began to fall. Fr John Coyne, Rector of the Seminary of Oscott in England, noted that “Now that the novelty is wearing off, parishes in many areas report dwindling congregations”. [199](#) And the Holy Week services are still playing to rapidly diminishing audiences in many areas, as churches continued to close through the shortage of priests and declining numbers of the faithful. Even worse, the administration of Baptism, which was meant to be a high feature of the Easter Vigil, has plummeted to a level unprecedented in the history of the Church.

In January 1988, the Congregation for Divine Worship issued a Circular Letter which informs us that “the very concept of the Vigil has almost come to be forgotten” and blames this amnesia on “the inadequate formation given to the clergy and the faithful”. [200](#)

What more ironic indictment could there be of a key objective of the Holy Week reform which was to increase attendance? Fr (later Cardinal) Antonelli, who had been given chief responsibility for its implementation, had confidently explained in 1955 that the motives for the changes were “of a pastoral nature; that is, to bring the masses of the faithful back to the commemoration of the holiest mysteries of Christ’s Passion and Death”. [201](#) What neither he nor the other “Bugnini-bots” on the Commission realized was that the Holy Week reform, not being built on the solid rock of Tradition, had all the stability of a house of cards. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that it was subject to imminent collapse.

9. INTOLERANCE TOWARDS TRADITIONAL DEVOTIONS

An ineradicable sense of Catholic Tradition

When Bugnini described the reaction of the bishops to the reformed Easter Vigil as an “explosion of joy throughout the Church”, his jubilation was premature – the boast immediately backfired.

From 1951 onwards, the reform ran up against an intractable problem: a sense of Catholic Tradition among the majority of the faithful that could not be steamrollered out of existence. (That would, for the majority of Catholics, take some time longer to achieve). By 1959, the American Augustinian writer, Fr Dennis Geaney, commented glumly that “the restored Easter Vigil meets with quiet but stubborn resistance”. ²⁰² The people, in other words, were loath to give up their Holy Week traditions that had been an integral part of Catholic life for centuries.

It has always been a key aim of the Liturgical Movement to eliminate any expression of legitimate popular piety, whether it took place during the liturgy (in the silence of interior prayer) or outside it. Beauduin was the first to urge that Catholic devotions should undergo a process of “sublimation” so as “to have the Christian people all live the same spiritual life, to have them all nourished by the official worship of holy Mother Church”. ²⁰³ In his opinion, only strictly liturgical rites were of any real value in the Church.

From this erroneous notion (which was condemned by Pius XII) sprang another equally indefensible opinion: that the faithful only resorted to devotions because they were alienated from the true worship of the Church through lack of “active participation”. One of Beauduin’s main biographers explained how Catholic devotions were regarded with antipathy by the members of the Liturgical Movement who saw them as impediments to “active participation”:

“These popular devotions were religious exercises often enacted in common, but separate from the Church’s official liturgy. Over the centuries, as the liturgy was increasingly removed from the laity, these devotions grew in number and variety. Since they were often celebrated in the vernacular,

they had an appeal which was lacking in a Mass celebrated in a language no one could understand. Further, in a Church whose rituals had become increasingly clericalized, popular devotions offered the possibility of an experience of prayer that was authentically of the people”. [204](#)

The reformers also denigrated traditional devotions as a primitive hangover from supposedly superstitious pre-modern times and rejected them as being “saccharine”, “sentimental” and “individualistic”. But the underlying reason for their rejection was that they were an obstacle to “Ecumenism” – the movement to conciliate Protestants who also rejected Catholic devotions using the self-same rationalizations as the liturgical reformers. That is why they have been doing everything in their power to accelerate the collapse of pious customs and traditions which were dear to the Catholic faithful.

If we wish to know the true worth of Catholic devotions, and a full appreciation of their practice, we will have to consult the official documents of earlier centuries and the writings of Catholic leaders before the Liturgical Movement exerted its baneful influence in the Church. The contrast between the general attitude of the Church in the 19th and the later 20th century could not be more distinct. Popes Pius IX and Leo XIII heartily encouraged popular devotions to the Sacred Heart, Our Lady (including pilgrimages to Marian shrines) and various Saints by raising the status of their feasts, granting indulgences for their practice and conferring blessings on their sodalities.

For further confirmation of the positive light in which such devotions were held by Church leaders, let us now turn to the 19th-century Prelate, Cardinal Nicholas Wiseman who was instrumental in restoring the Catholic hierarchy to England in 1850 after centuries of persecution and suppression:

“Holy desires may grow; and what satisfied their yearnings in their weaker state may not be sufficient food for them in their strength. And we believe sincerely that the longing of our people after the higher spirit of devotion is, and has for some time been, on the increase. Devotions, formerly but little known and practised, are becoming, thank God, familiar to us, as to the rest of the Church. We may instance the Rosary, that favourite tribute of sympathy to God’s Blessed Mother from her affectionate children which is every day coming into more general use. Other devotions we could name, which evince a growing love for the tenderer and more moving class of religious emotions”. [205](#)

The Cardinal was referring to the natural resurgence among English Catholics of pious devotions which were once flourishing in the Middle Ages but were virtually rooted out of public and private life in the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation. It is ironic that members of the Liturgical Movement, in their desire to conciliate Protestant sensibilities, took steps to reverse the trend of devotionism among Catholics which had been encouraged by papal approval for the whole Church.

A false dichotomy

There is no doubt that the 20th-century liturgical reformers viewed their efforts in terms of a zero-sum game in which the winnings on their side must necessarily equal the losses on the side of traditional Catholics. Suddenly, devotions found themselves *in competition* with the liturgy, whereas before Beauduin's time they had always been regarded as a means of supplementing the benefits of the liturgy by increasing the religious fervour of the faithful.

But Beauduin's call for the "sublimation" of devotions was a veiled invitation to discard them, leaving the official liturgy as the only option for the faithful. This is precisely what was understood by his followers in the Liturgical Movement, as is clear from statements made by some of its leading lights. Let us take just a few examples.

Fr William Busch, a co-worker of Dom Virgil Michel at St John's Abbey, Minnesota – appointed by Michel to the editorial board of the first edition of *Orate Fratres* in 1926 – complained in a letter to the Editor of *Commonweal* magazine in 1925:

"Undoubtedly there is something amiss in the present quality of Catholic spirituality. Our devotional life and hence our whole mentality as Catholics is individualistic, and the chief reason for this is to be found in an examination of our prayer books. The individualistic character of modern prayer literature cannot fail to impress itself on our life and dim our social vision. But the official prayer of the Church, which we do not use or which we use so privately and mechanically so as not to count, are filled through and through with that very spirit for which you are justly pleading. We have lost that sense of Christian neighbourliness and of the kingdom of God on earth which the liturgy teaches". [206](#)

If we think about this for a moment without the anti-traditional bias, it becomes clear that another reason (in addition to “Ecumenism”) for the rejection of devotions was that they could not be used for what Dom Michel called “social regeneration” [207](#) which for the reforming liturgists corresponded with extreme Left-wing ideas of “Social Justice”. When Fr Hans Reinhold, a proponent of these views, visited St John’s Abbey in 1938, the year of Fr Michel’s death, he found that already “the monks shared my liberal economic and political views” and he confirmed that “we were all of one mind on liturgical reform”. [208](#) Politics, then, for the reformers, fitted into liturgy like a hand in a glove.

Regarding devotions, the French Oratorian Fr Louis Bouyer, commented in 1955 – the very year when the Holy Week reforms were signed into law by the Decree *Maxima Redemptionis*:

“It is when people are no longer in touch with the authentic spirit of the liturgy that such devotions are developed...You cannot at the same time hail Christ as if He were a little Baby in His cradle, and adore Him as the risen Lord...You cannot weep for His Passion as if you did not know that it has already ended in victory, and also exult in the resurrection. You cannot combine a mysticism centred on Jesus as the ‘Prisoner of the tabernacle’, with celebrating the Eucharist as the saving Mystery...The more you are attached to one set of these alternatives, the more you must accept the loss of the other...You cannot eat your cake and treasure it for tomorrow: you must choose...We cannot hope to return to a living liturgy while we concentrate on these devotions and even add to them”. [209](#)

The influential Dominican theologian, Fr Yves Congar, stated with reference to the liturgy and popular devotions: “Surely we must choose one *or* the other”. [210](#) And a historian of the Roman Rite summed up the general feeling of reformers: “We must deplore the success of devotions because they invade the whole of Catholic consciousness at the expense of the liturgy”. [211](#)

The way of the truffids?

On the theme of invasion, Fr Joseph Jungmann, one of the consultants to Pius XII’s Liturgical Commission, was comprehensive in his condemnation of devotions. He stated that the “entire wild growth of very peripheral forms

of devotion” was as welcome in the Church as weeds in a well-tended garden. ²¹² Devotions were thus depicted as a feral population of sinister weeds – the word “triffids” comes to mind – advancing on the liturgy with malevolent intent. This was one example of the sort of irrational prejudice on which the Liturgical Movement thrived.

As calumnies against traditional piety flew thick and fast, popular devotions came to be viewed as pestilential – as if they were a swarm of locusts or some sort of disease to be controlled or eradicated. And so they were persecuted by the liturgical establishment almost to vanishing point. As a result, the only place where toleration for popular devotions was envisaged was in the home, at meetings, in national or local festivals and in some religious societies – in fact anywhere except in church.

The history of the Liturgical Movement has shown that any attempt to systematically root out popular devotions destroys not only those forms of piety, but piety itself. Wherever deeply ingrained Catholic traditions – whether liturgical or not – have been rooted out, the void is invariably filled by activities of a secular nature, from which a sense of holy reverence is necessarily absent. The truth of this observation has been demonstrated on a massive, world-wide scale in the liturgies of the *Novus Ordo*.

The downplaying of pious devotions during Holy Week

The most popular Holy Week devotions were visiting seven Altars of Repose, the Stations of the Cross, the *Tre Ore* – a Good Friday service consisting of sermons on the Seven Last Words, meditations and hymns commemorating the Three Hours’ Agony of Christ on the Cross – religious processions in the streets, and the blessing of homes on Holy Saturday evening. The latter was specifically eliminated in the Instruction accompanying *Maxima Redemptionis* to make way for the “restored” Easter Vigil. The rest mostly went by the wayside through neglect by the clergy.

As for the millions of Catholics who found spiritual refreshment in the Holy Week devotions, they found that many were simply withdrawn by pastors who ceased to encourage their use in parishes. And without such encouragement, traditional devotions were left to wither and die. So the good of souls was not the point at all: it was rather the reformers’ desire to

use the Church's liturgy as a means to a self-serving end – to indulge their animosity to the devotions which were popular with the faithful.

And yet, in *Mediator Dei* (1947), Pius XII had encouraged and defended traditional devotions. ²¹³ That was *before* he appointed the members of his Liturgical Commission. But by 1955 there was a distinct change in papal policy towards the popular devotions traditionally associated with Holy Week: they were mentioned only once in *Maxima Redemptionis* where they were treated with aloofness and disdain, as if they were unworthy interlopers on hallowed ground. The Decree states:

“nor can these [Holy Week] rites be sufficiently compensated for by those exercises of devotion which are usually called extra-liturgical”.

In this statement by the Holy See, we can see the enduring influence of Beauduin (see Chapter 4) who also employed the same straw man argument. The fallacy was that no one had proposed replacing the Church's liturgy with “extra-liturgical” services. In fact, both had been coexisting peacefully and happily for centuries. Contrary to what was asserted in *Maxima Redemptionis*, both forms of piety had been cherished by the faithful in most European countries, especially those with a long Catholic tradition. To say that they were attended by crowds would be something of an understatement; in many Catholic countries, whole villages and towns turned out to attend them.

There is eye-witness evidence that during Holy Week in Rome in the early 20th century all churches large and small were packed for liturgical as well as “extra-liturgical” services:

“On the afternoons of Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday the great basilicas of St Peter, St John Lateran, and St Mary Major were thronged with thousands of worshippers...while devout Romans preferred to attend the services in the less-known churches. Never, perhaps, before were the Altars of Repose visited by such immense numbers – outside San Silvestro or the Gesù one had sometimes to wait a quarter of an hour before being able to enter the church, while at the Scala Santa throughout the entire week there was an unending pilgrimage of the devout which ascended the sacred stairs on their knees. For the time being it is hard to remember that Rome of 1911 is honeycombed with Freemasonry, Socialism, Anarchy, and Anticlericalism in all its forms”. ²¹⁴

A similar scenario was found in 18th-century Venice at the Basilica of St Mark where we learn that “[a]t the Holy Week ceremonies in St Mark’s, the Doge was present as a matter of course; and with him the Signory, ²¹⁵ the Senate, the great officers of State, the Papal Nuncio and the other ambassadors”. ²¹⁶

By playing liturgical and “extra-liturgical” ceremonies against each other, *Maxima Redemptionis* thus stirred up a spirit of contention in the Church with the Sacred Triduum at the centre of the storm.

In the accompanying Instruction which followed the Decree, bishops were no longer requested to actively promote devotions, but to treat with caution (“*prudenter*”) the various popular customs (“*populares consuetudines*”) associated with Holy Week. In the same document, traditional devotions were referred to as problems to be solved (“*De quibusdam difficultatibus componendis*”) – in other words spokes in the wheel of the Liturgical Movement – rather than as cherished traditions and efficacious means of spiritual renewal for the faithful.

Furthermore, the bishops were asked to instruct the faithful that the “restored” Holy Week rites were vastly superior to any of their devotions. ²¹⁷ But the message, rammed home with heavy force, about the superiority of the Church’s official liturgy over popular devotions, was another straw man argument. No matter how attached the faithful were to their devotions, they had an unquestionable faith in the Mass and the Sacraments as occupying the place of greatest importance in the economy of salvation.

A “dog-whistle” strategy

The progressive bishops in the Liturgical Movement understood the radical revisionist implications of the Decree far more clearly than many of the conservatives outside the Movement. That is because the Decree (like other official documents regulating the liturgical reforms, including Vatican II’s), was phrased in coded language whose meaning is lost on a general audience but has a specific resonance for a certain subgroup. The relevance here is that the members of the Liturgical Movement who were “in the know” – like Beauduin, Bouyer, Congar, Jungmann and other reformers – would take away the intended subliminal message.

The underlying dog-whistled message was that they should be on the alert to defend the boundaries of the reformed rites against any competition from traditionalists who sought to preserve and foster popular devotions. It was a coded message concealed in an apparently straightforward statement that the liturgy is of greater importance than devotions.

Its success was due to two key factors. First, that pre-existing prejudices of the reformers against devotions were allowed to colour the Decree *Maxima Redemptionis* without the large majority of the faithful realizing this was taking place. Secondly, that it allowed the faithful to be manipulated in ways they would resist if the Decree had openly declared the reformers' intention to suppress popular devotions.

A particularly insidious form of propaganda

Maxima Redemptionis and its accompanying Instruction thus helped to give a negative connotation to the traditional Holy Week devotions, implying that these were in some way usurpers of the Church's official liturgy. It was only a matter of time before these anti-devotion sentiments would become entrenched in the mainstream Church to the point where they would routinely produce a "knee-jerk" reaction in most of the clergy against the very concept of traditional Catholic piety.

With the initial impetus given by *Maxima Redemptionis*, many popular devotions, especially those pious practices connected with Holy Week which the Liturgical Movement has been doing everything possible to suppress, were officially consigned to oblivion.

Having given Bugnini free rein to influence the reform of the Holy Week rites against the judgement of many of the world's bishops, Pius XII further increased his scope for liturgical mayhem by appointing him as a consultor to the Congregation of Rites in 1956. True to form, Bugnini went about his task in predictable fashion, like a self-propelled, guided missile which was directed by the liturgical reformers to accomplish their long-planned agenda.

He immediately set in motion plans to bring about further changes to the Roman Breviary which Pius XII had allowed him to decimate in 1955 on the excuse of greater "simplification".

In 1957, the Congregation of Rites again consulted the world's bishops about further liturgical changes. But this time Bugnini's "explosion of joy" turned out to be the dampest of squibs. The archival records of the

Congregation show that the majority of bishops wanted the status quo of the Divine Office to be preserved intact. One bishop is reported to have declared that he was representative of the “large number” (92% as it was recorded) ²¹⁸ of bishops who were satisfied with the Breviary as it was and who also considered *any* change not only undesirable but dangerous to the Church. He even quoted St Thomas Aquinas (*Summa*, I-II, q. 97, art. 2) on the harmful consequences that are likely to ensue when laws are changed, adding: “It is not easy to say ‘no’ to requests for change, but that is the proper action here”. ²¹⁹

This is a statement of great significance. A bishop – representing the large majority at that time – had, to his great credit, dared to assert the overriding importance of defending liturgical traditions at a time when the reformers were teaching contempt for and even hostility towards them.

Furthermore, the statistics show that only 8% of the bishops wanted the Breviary to be changed, which in all probability corresponds to the percentage of bishops supporting the aims of the Liturgical Movement. The same source reveals that only 17% of the bishops asked permission for the use of the vernacular at least in some parts of the Breviary; they were massively outnumbered by those who explicitly asked for Latin to be retained for the sake of the priesthood. ²²⁰

Maxima Redemptionis: a departure from Tradition

It was the perennial teaching of the Church regarding its *lex orandi* that the preservation of liturgical tradition was an indispensable means of safeguarding the integrity of Catholic doctrine. Yet the Congregation of Rites under Pius XII was issuing Decrees and Instructions promoting substantial changes to the Holy Week ceremonies whose texts, rubrics and ceremonial traditions proclaimed and transmitted the orthodox Catholic Faith.

We should not underestimate the magnitude of these changes which included outright novelties such as “active participation”, use of the vernacular, the priest facing the people and invasion of the sanctuary by the laity. Taken together, they represented a major shift in the liturgy of the Church.

But it was not just the changes to the rites of Holy Week that broke the thread of continuity with the past. More fundamentally, it was the conscious

attempt by the reformers to reinvent the liturgy and their deliberate plan to inculcate their own desired values at odds with Tradition.

A Rubicon too far

With the Holy Week reforms, a Rubicon had been crossed. History furnishes an interesting comparison between the army of Julius Caesar which crossed the Rubicon in 49 BC and the members of the Liturgical Movement (at whose behest Pius XII made the reforms). Just as crossing the river was an act that ended in civil war within Rome, so the Holy Week reforms crossed the boundaries of Tradition and would eventually split the faithful into warring camps. Both acts were pivotal events in history that committed the people involved to a specific course. [221](#)

It seems that Pius XII had not heeded his Predecessor's observations regarding the responsibilities of Popes towards the liturgy:

“No wonder then, that the Roman Pontiffs have been so solicitous to safeguard and protect the liturgy. They have used the same care in making laws for the regulation of the liturgy, in preserving it from adulteration, as they have in giving accurate expression to the dogmas of the faith”. *Divini Cultus* (1928)

It cannot be argued, however, that Pius XII used the same care in making liturgical laws. Having once warned about the “suicide of altering the Faith in the liturgy”, he nonetheless failed to preserve the Holy Week liturgy from adulteration and contamination by alien elements which could lead to a false understanding of doctrine.

Disowning the past

Furthermore, the acceptance of liturgical change had many other deleterious effects. It cast a shadow of criticism on the Holy Week rites of previous centuries, and even on those bishops and priests who had been faithfully celebrating them during the reign of Pius XII. With the Pope giving his support to Bugnini, they were left open to criticism as being “insensitive” to the aspirations of the laity, guilty of injustice and, in a word, “unpastoral”. As events have shown, they were dismissed as hopelessly hidebound conservatives standing in the way of progress and modernity. Their authority would be undermined and, as St Thomas warned in such cases,

discipline would be shaken, leading to calls for far more radical changes in the future.

Legitimizing dissent

Publicly expressed anti-traditional challenges to authority went unchecked. The radical agenda of the reformers was aired in internationally known journals [222](#) and also at international Congresses held in the early 1950s: at Maria Laach (Germany), Mont Sainte-Odile (France), Lugano (Switzerland), Mont-César (Louvain, Belgium) and Assisi (Italy). It is not an exaggeration to say that these congresses were characterized by a climate of seething mutiny against the Church's sacred liturgical traditions. It was as if a simmering cauldron was slowly coming to the boil, the fire beneath it fuelled by animosity to centuries of liturgical tradition.

Maria Laach (1951)

The following points, unanimously accepted by the delegates, were among 12 resolutions to be forwarded to the Holy See:

- reform of the priest's silent prayers (including the Offertory) during Mass;
- **significant changes to the Roman Canon;** [223](#)
- suppression of the prayers at the foot of the altar (citing the Easter Vigil reform as a precedent);
- all of the Mass up to the Preface to be said away from the altar denuded of sacred vessels;
- a longer cycle of scriptural readings, all in the vernacular only;
- introduction of bidding prayers with vernacular responses by the faithful;
- less frequent recitation of the Credo;
- elimination of the Confiteor before Communion;
- suppression of all prayers after the Blessing, i.e. the Last Gospel and the Leonine prayers. [224](#)

Mont Sainte-Odile (1952)

This meeting largely continued the requests made at Maria Laach with some additions:

- elimination of some of the celebrant's genuflections, signs of the Cross and kissing of the paten;
- simplification of the formula of Communion of the faithful to "*Corpus Christi*";
- increased opportunities for the faithful to join in the singing of the Mass, especially by newly composed melodies in the vernacular at Communion time. [225](#)

Lugano Congress (1953)

The following resolutions were approved by the entire assembly which included Cardinal Ottaviani and Cardinal Frings of Cologne, 15 archbishops and bishops and hundreds of priests:

- increased "active participation" of the laity, supported by a message from Mgr Montini in Rome;
- the laity to "pray and sing in their own tongue even during Sung Masses"; [226](#)
- all Scripture readings to be in the vernacular;
- revision of all ceremonies of Holy Week in line with the recently revised Easter Vigil.

There were two notable features of the Congress. First, a signed message from Pope Pius XII, dated 9 September 1953, was read out giving his heartfelt encouragement to the deliberations and his blessing to "each and every participant". [227](#) He did not seem to mind that the Congress had been organized by the Liturgical Institute of Trier and the *Centre de Pastorale Liturgique* to further their revolutionary agendas; or that among the participants were those who sought to destroy Tradition e.g. Bugnini, Beauduin, Bishop Albert Stohr of Mainz and Bishop Simon Landersdorfer of Passau (the latter two jointly Head of the Liturgical Commission appointed by the German Episcopal Conference to represent all the

dissident reformers of the German-speaking lands including Guardini and Pius Parsch).

Secondly, Cardinal Ottaviani (famous for his Intervention), celebrated Mass facing the people ²²⁸ – a particularly prophetic gesture foreshadowing his defeat by the progressivists at Vatican II.

Mont-César Conference (1954)

The meeting featured two themes

- a more extended cycle of scriptural readings at Mass;
- a new rite of concelebration.

One of the participants noted that, in the course of the meeting, “a telegram was received from Msgr Montini announcing the papal blessing imparted to all participants, and expressing the Holy Father’s satisfaction that these two actual themes were being competently studied and discussed from the historical, theological and pastoral points of view”. ²²⁹

Assisi Congress (1956)

As the whole ground plan for the future *Novus Ordo* was already drawn up in the previous congresses, the Assisi participants simply put the finishing touches to their radical agenda. The Congress descended into a self-congratulatory “smugfest” with participants preening themselves on the righteousness of their cause and on their success in wresting so many concessions from the Pope. In their papers read out at the Congress, they lavished the highest praise on the Holy Father for his “admirable initiatives in the field of pastoral liturgy”. ²³⁰ Who would have thought that Pius XII would become the toast of the liberals?

From Assisi, the Congress moved to Rome where it concluded with the Pope’s address to the participants. In it, Pius XII stated that the Liturgical Movement was “a sign of the providential dispositions of God for the present time, of the movement of the Holy Ghost in the Church”.

Thus, he helped to build a positive image of the Liturgical Movement for public consumption, with the result that what had once been a hole-in-the-corner activity and an isolated phenomenon lacking any great prestige, was put firmly on the map and made ready to become a mainstream activity.

Bugnini's cock-a-doodle of victory

Bugnini crowed with delight: “Who would have predicted at that time that three years later the greatest ecclesial event of the century, Vatican Council II, would be announced, in which the desires expressed at Assisi would be fulfilled, and this by means of the very men who were present at Assisi?” ²³¹ He was right in one respect – many of the Assisi delegates would later exert enormous influence in determining the course of Vatican II and creating the content of some of its documents. ²³² However, his powers of prediction seemed to have deserted him when he declared that the event “was, in God’s plan, a dawn announcing a resplendent day that would have no decline”. ²³³

Summoning the Apocalypse

The summons to Rome for the Assisi participants to be greeted by the Pope can be seen as a papal endorsement of their agenda. Fr Löw of the Sacred Congregation of Rites stated that the organizers of the Assisi Congress “were the four centres of liturgical effort in Germany, France, Italy and Switzerland”. ²³⁴ He might as well have said the Four Horses of the Apocalypse because of the chaos, anarchy and destruction that were set in train by the reforming zeal of Pius XII’s inner circle of trusted stalwarts.

10. PIUS XII ENDORSES THE LITURGICAL REVOLUTION

Pius XII's address to the participants of the Assisi Congress in 1956 contains a number of unwelcome surprises for those who thought of him as in every way a solidly traditional Pope. Just as the Congress itself had turned out to be a platform for tendentious propaganda, so the Pope's speech reflected and perpetuated the reformers' "narrative", endorsing their message about "active participation" for the faithful in the liturgy.

A papal fanfare for the Liturgical Movement

In his speech, Pius XII lauded what he termed the "practical accomplishments" of the Liturgical Movement in the last 30 years. Among the "practical accomplishments" which he had so far enabled were the following:

- the vernacular could be used in the administration of the Sacraments;
- the faithful could recite aloud the server's responses during Mass and sing along with the choir;
- women were officially permitted, under certain conditions, to sing in the choir; [235](#)
- the 1955 Holy Week liturgy, particularly the Easter Vigil, was gutted and reconstructed to cater for "active participation" of the laity; in some ceremonies the celebrant was required to face the people and there was an optional dialogue in the vernacular;
- the Breviary was drastically shortened ("simplified") as the precursor to a more thorough reform incorporating the wishes of the reformers. In the Opening Speech of the Assisi Congress in 1956, Cardinal Cicognani said that the "simplification of the rubrics was the forerunner of the eventual reform of the Breviary". [236](#)

The Pope stated that "undeniable progress" had been made through these reforms. But "progress" does not necessarily guarantee improvement, as in the case of the progress of a terminal disease. In the context of the Liturgical Movement, "progress" meant only an advance along the road

toward the goals envisaged by the architects of Progressivism. And we know exactly what those goals were – the replacement of the Church’s traditional liturgy with a man-centred construct in which the “active participation” of the laity would be the predominant feature. Yet Pius XII stated: “We sincerely desire that the Liturgical Movement progress and We wish to help it”.

A new “pastoral” approach to the liturgy

These reforms represented a significant turning point in the Church’s liturgical development, the precedence of so-called “pastoral liturgy” (aimed at adapting the ceremonies to the prevailing mentality of modern man) over the objective liturgical tradition of the Church. As Bugnini explained in his Memoirs, the Liturgical Movement, with the support of Pope Pius XII, “entered upon its true course – that of pastoral concern, and was thus returning to the ideal it had had in the beginning”. ²³⁷ But where does that leave the liturgy of all the intervening centuries? It was obviously to be passed over as neither “true” nor “pastoral” nor “ideal”.

In fact, one of the speakers at the Assisi Congress, Fr Josef Jungmann, posited that the Church’s liturgy had, since early Christian times, become “corrupted” and had lost its power to sanctify the faithful because they could neither understand nor participate in it. The implication of this smear on the Church’s sacred patrimony is that what we once esteemed was never really valuable in the first place. From which it follows that somewhere in its early history the Holy Spirit had departed from the Catholic liturgy, only to return in the 20th century with the new “pastoral” approach of the Liturgical Movement.

Playing to the gallery

It is undeniable that Pius XII favoured this new “pastoral” approach and even thought that it bore the Divine stamp of approval. To the delight of the Assisi participants gathered in Rome, he stated:

“The Liturgical Movement is thus shown forth as a sign of the providential dispositions of God for the present time, of the movement of the Holy Spirit in the Church”.

If God was with it, who could be against it? A more imprudent and divisive opinion could hardly be imagined – imprudent because it seemed to imply

that the traditional liturgy was grossly deficient and needed Spirit-led changes; and divisive because it signalled the Pope's preference for the reformers rather than the conservatives in the Church, at least on certain issues.

But the salient point is that the Pope – or whoever wrote his speech – simply *assumed* that because the liturgical reforms were promoted by members of the Church, their Movement must perforce enjoy Divine approval. His statement that “the chief driving force, both in doctrine and in practical application, has come from the hierarchy” is deeply troubling for two reasons.

First, it is an admission devastating in its implications. It reveals that it was the Church's leaders, including the Pope himself, who were the driving force behind the international effort to reform the liturgy. In other words, it was the pastors who were responsible for driving the sheep towards a liturgical cliff over which they would fall with astonishing suddenness within a few years. However, only a tiny minority of bishops at that time favoured the reforms; and at the beginning of his pontificate most did not even have the slightest suspicion that such reforms were being planned. It is incomprehensible, therefore, that he should seek to alter the spirituality of Catholics who valued the Church's traditions to suit those who did not.

Second, the Pope talked as if the reforms were unimpeachably orthodox “both in doctrine and in practical application” as if the *lex credendi* were in perfect accord with the *lex orandi*. Here we are not addressing the orthodoxy of Pius XII's magisterial teaching on matters of Catholic doctrine. But to the degree that his reforms promoted “active participation” of the laity in the sacred functions, they introduced a tension between the Faith and pastoral practice. The laity was now seen to be “on the move” against “clericalist” pastors, who had allegedly robbed them of their rightful roles in the liturgy, to take back what belonged to them by virtue of their Baptism. The clergy-laity struggle had been the *raison d'être* of the Liturgical Movement since its inception by Dom Lambert Beauduin.

Even though Pius XII taught the true doctrine of the Catholic priesthood, he nevertheless gave official impetus to the rolling revolution of lay “active participation” which challenged the exclusive role of the priest. By promoting this competitive spirit, he initiated the process that turned the liturgy into an ideological battleground which continues to our day, to the detriment of the ministerial priesthood and the confusion of the faithful.

Pius XII misled by false propaganda

Much of Pius XII's Assisi speech echoed the desiderata which the reformers had been putting forward in their various congresses and publications. The fact that the forces of Progressivism should play a pivotal role in the Pope's speech is highly significant. It shows that he was swayed by their rhetoric in making policy decisions for the rest of the Church. He took their word for it that "the faithful received these directives with gratitude and showed themselves ready to respond to them".

But that was pure fabrication put about by Bugnini who had massaged the results of the liturgical Commission's surveys to give the misleading impression of general acceptance. For all his efforts, Bugnini had not produced evidence that was in reality objectively convincing or statistically significant. Also, the reformers had been spreading a false sense of despondency about how useless the traditional rites were and claiming that the faithful welcomed with relief all the new, exciting initiatives that were on offer.

There was no general euphoria among the Catholic population, clerical or lay, in response to the reforms. In fact, the reformers themselves complained for years about the lack of enthusiasm for "active participation" and the extreme difficulty in getting the faithful to say or sing the responses. Besides, it is dishonest to claim that the laity joyfully accepted the reforms when other motivations, such as duty and obedience, played a part in their attendance at these ceremonies.

It is often claimed that Pius XII succumbed to the machinations of liturgical reformers because of illness and infirmity. While these undoubtedly played their part in weakening his resistance, there was another, even greater, factor involved – the insidious power of "groupthink" which had begun to exercise its malign influence on his policy decisions as early as 1948 when he set up his Commission for the General Reform of the Liturgy.

"Groupthink" is a term applied to a situation whereby a leader of a nation or an organization makes faulty decisions when pressure from his closest advisors adversely affects his reasoning powers, his ability to evaluate the reality of a situation, and even his moral judgement. From early in his pontificate, Pius XII was a prisoner of precisely that thinking. The signs are

clear that his outlook was consistent with the usual symptoms of groupthink.

Even the most outlandish claims were accepted as fact because they conveniently concurred with the prevailing prejudice e.g. that the Holy Spirit was inspiring a Movement whose *raison d'être* was first to destabilize then destroy the Church's sacred Liturgy, the living source of Catholic spiritual life.

Pius XII greatly overestimated the integrity of the reformers for whom Catholic traditions were something to be laughed away, shouted down and ignored, not something to be respected, understood or even considered. In his Address, he told the Assisi participants that it was "a consolation and a joy for Us to know that We can rely on your help and your understanding in these matters". Because he viewed their Movement with excessive optimism, he was prepared to ignore the risks of tampering with the liturgy and the potential failure of his policies.

He seemed to be naively confident that he could manipulate and control the *lex orandi* to gain a "pastoral" advantage without harming the *lex credendi*. But it was merely wishful thinking to imagine that the inevitably bad consequences could be averted by adding restrictions, conditions and explanations. He was dealing with bishops who had a liberal attitude to rules.

A typical example is the permission he had given to the German Episcopal Conference in 1943 for vernacular singing at High Mass, provided that this was strictly confined to Germany. But Cardinal Frings, Archbishop of Cologne and Chairman of the German Episcopate, showed Pius XII what he thought of papal authority when he sang part of the Mass in German at the Assisi Congress in 1956. Also at the same Congress, Archbishop Stohr of Mainz, head of the German Liturgical Commission, threw down the gauntlet to Pius XII when he defiantly declared that the German Bishops would never dispense with vernacular singing at Mass and furthermore that it should be extended to the universal Church.

Shielded from reality by his entourage, Pius XII promoted the illusion that the faithful joyfully accepted the reforms, and overlooked the high degree of selectivity in information gathering undertaken by Bugnini.

He did not consult experts (Mgr Léon Gromier, for instance) who could have offered a traditional perspective; nor did he scrutinize the intellectual integrity of the historical research carried out by the reformers. In fact, he

endorsed the general thrust of the Movement: “The present-day attitude of liturgical milieux towards the past seems to Us in general to be entirely sound: there is investigation, serious study, attachment to that which truly deserves it, without, moreover, a falling into excess”.

Although Pius XII was neither forced to innovate nor compelled to make the changes that he authorized, he allowed the Liturgical Movement to become a major weapon in the campaign to challenge traditional values – itself no small reason for the incoherence and progressive breakdown of his government.

The effect of groupthink on papal legislation

Pius XII gave the reformers unprecedented influence over the manner in which the faithful should participate in the liturgy. The liturgical leaders were the ones to decide not only what the people supposedly wanted, but, more importantly, what in their opinion, they *should* want. Rome then authorized oppressive policies to change their way of participating in the liturgy so that they would conform to the Liturgical Movement’s notion of what was acceptable and what was not.

To the extent that the rule of prayer was replaced by the rule of liturgists, conservative bishops were forced to do what Pius XII’s Liturgical Commission collectively decided. It is incomprehensible that the Pope could lend countenance to such a group of liturgists whose gross disrespect for Catholic traditions betrayed an equivalent contempt for the Catholic faithful.

The Assisi Address presented a false “Third Way”

Pius XII helped to reposition the Liturgical Movement from its originally marginal, even underground, status, enabling liturgically liberal reformers to hijack the centre ground and push traditionally-minded Catholics into territory that could then be labelled as “extremist”. He achieved this by the technique of “triangulation”, a strategy often practised by politicians when faced with difficult dilemmas: they adopt a position both above and between two “extremes”.

In an attempt to transcend both ancient traditions and progressivist reforms, the Pope stated:

“[O]ne must avoid two extreme attitudes with regard to the past: a blind attachment and a complete contempt”.

And: “On the part of the Church, the liturgy today admits of a preoccupation with progress, but also with conservation and defence”. (This is eerily echoed in Vatican II’s Constitution on the Liturgy §23 where it is stated: “In order that sound tradition be retained, and yet the way remain open to legitimate progress...”)

A ventriloquist at work

It is not generally known that this was really Bugnini speaking through the mouth of the Pope. For he had already articulated precisely this strategy in 1948 when, as Secretary of the Liturgical Commission, and with the express consent of Pius XII, the *Memoria Sulla Riforma Liturgica* was published privately, ²³⁸ a document which laid down the fundamental principles by which the intended reform was to proceed.

The first principle on the list was that “the opposed claims of the conservative tendency and the innovative tendency must be balanced”.

The dynamics of this triangulated process are easy to comprehend. At the base of the “triangle”, occupying opposite vertices, were the desire for “antiquarianism” (a return to the liturgy of early Christian times) and the desire for innovation (a preference to have only modern vestments, music, language, architecture and rites). And at the apex stood Bugnini’s “solution” which would transcend this polarization by achieving a synthesis based on what he called “higher principles”.

Where the hermeneutic of rupture began

But what about the traditional principles of liturgical development which had been faithfully observed throughout the Church’s history? These did not even come into the calculus. They were simply cast aside so that Bugnini could proceed with his synthesis to produce something essentially *different* from Catholic Tradition.

The fact that the *Memoria* was published with Pius XII’s permission indicates that the Pope allowed Bugnini to dictate the terms of the reform from the start. It was a reform in which, for the first time in the Church’s history, the essentially “conservative tendency” of the liturgy (which was a symbol of a Catholic identity down the ages) would be gradually lost in a

merger with the “innovative tendency” in which “change” played a significant role. This was what happened in the 1951-55 Holy Week reform. It was, therefore, an abandonment of traditional principles on the part of all concerned.

The rhetoric of the *Memoria* was hollow and its cynicism manifest. On the one hand, “antiquarianism” *did* play a role in some of Pius XII’s reforms, as Bugnini intended; and on the other, the Holy Week liturgy *was* brought as closely into conformity with contemporary culture as it was possible to do at the time.

Moreover, the modernizers would rise in a very short space of time to occupy the dominant positions inside the structures of ecclesiastical government. Thereby the way was prepared for Tradition to be soon replaced by a new man-made, Bugnini-centric alternative.

Pius XII’s Address left the Catholic faithful completely unaware that the Assisi Congress was really a fig leaf for radical reformers who cared little for the rules that governed the rest of the Church. He presented their campaign as if it really were (as they always claimed) about the salvation of souls and the pastoral needs of the faithful, ²³⁹ instead of what it really was – a campaign of hostility towards Tradition. In fact, if he had told the truth about them, he could hardly have invited them to Rome for a cordial reception.

Tectonic shifts and fault lines in the Assisi Address

When Pius XII addressed the participants of the Assisi Congress, he did more than tell them a pleasing tale of progress. The analogy with the precursory signs of an impending earthquake is apt. His speech contained proposals which, when put into action, were to produce seismic changes of literally Church-shattering proportions, causing the bastions of Tradition to collapse. Yet Pius XII did not seem to realize that the ground was already shifting beneath him or that the tremors beneath the ecclesiastical crust would soon lead to the “big one” (Vatican II) whose epicentre was in Rome.

We will deal with each of Pius XII’s points in turn, beginning with his astounding statement that:

“The present-day liturgy interests itself also in a number of particular problems concerning, for example, the relation of the liturgy with the

religious ideas of the world today, contemporary culture, social questions and depth psychology”. [240](#)

Regardless of whether it was foreseen or not by Pius XII, a preoccupation with other faiths and “psycho-social” ideas in the liturgy was bound to give rise not only to religious pluralism but also to the secularization of Catholic Faith and Morals.

Rise of “liturgical theology”

By giving the green light to “ecumenism”, [241](#) inculturation, acceptance of social and political factors as well as experimentation with depth psychology in the liturgy, Pius XII initiated a tectonic shift in liturgical practice. It was a move away from the idea of liturgy as the expression of the objective truths of the Faith in favour of a new world view which appeals to the subjective dimensions of the human mind. In other words, the traditional theology based on Revelation was beginning to give way to a “liturgical theology” based on existential models of the human person as a valid criterion for orthopraxis. From there it was just a short step to liturgy as the Cult of Man and the de-Catholicizing of the Church via the sanctuary.

As subsequent history has shown, a liturgy shaped and influenced by the demands of extraneous religions (as would happen with the *Novus Ordo*) would lose its Catholic identity as the expression of the one true Faith. And a liturgy in which feelings, emotions and a non-judgemental attitude to morality are emphasized would lead to the “opening to the world” (as Vatican II’s *Gaudium et Spes* later demanded), setting the stage for the moral dissolution of society.

What has depth psychology to do with the Catholic liturgy?

Depth psychology, which purported to be a therapeutic means of dealing with problems of the human mind, originated with the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung – the former a Jewish atheist, the latter a founder of an esoteric and deeply anti-Christian religious cult. By the mid-1950s, when Pius XII gave his blessing to depth psychology in his Assisi Address, a movement to blend Freudian and Jungian theories with Catholic pastoral practice was at its height among many priests and lay

people in the Church. ²⁴² One such project had fortunately failed a few years earlier with the abortive attempt of the Dominican Fr Victor White to integrate Jung's theories with Thomistic philosophy. ²⁴³ It failed because he tried to amalgamate two contradictory positions.

The “psychologization” of the liturgy

It is worth considering that the practical application of depth psychology to the liturgy was logically doomed from the start because these modern psychological theories offered rival alternatives to the Christian-based psychology which had existed from the time of the Scriptures, the Desert Fathers, the Doctors of the Church, the Saints and the Scholastic philosophers. Pius XII could not have successfully integrated depth psychology into the liturgy for the following reasons:

- it was conceived in the mind of Carl Jung as a “religion of the Self” to give free rein to the libido and liberate the human psyche from the restrictions of a “rule-bound” Church, especially in the area of sexual morality;
- Jung's ideas on religion were drawn from Gnostic sources, the occult, Eastern mysticism, ancient pagan cults of the earth goddesses, eroticism, medieval alchemy and various “New Age” philosophies;
- Jung regarded the Mass as simply a figment of the human psyche and attributed its transformative power to a dream experienced by a third century Gnostic alchemist, Zosimos of Panopolis; ²⁴⁴
- Jung rejected the idea of a transcendent God and taught people to reject all external authority and search for the “god within”;
- depth psychology reduced the intellectual faculties to the level of sensation, elevated feelings and emotions as the source of all truth, and led inevitably to the Pentecostal Movement and Charismatic liturgies;
- needless to say, there would be no place for the traditional Roman Mass with its emphasis on rubrics and objective truth.

How anyone could hope to draw spiritually pure waters from such a polluted well is a mystery.

The world invades the Church

We will now consider some of the results of reliance on the “expertise” of psychologists in the Liturgical Movement’s quest to adapt the liturgy to the mentality of modern man and provide a sense of psychological wellbeing for the participants.

The first casualty of the “psychologization” of the liturgy is reverence for God. As depth psychology – even in the hands of Catholic practitioners – induces people to turn in upon themselves and seek “self-discovery”, it follows that only a people-centred liturgy would be considered a suitable medium of worship. Hence the virtual absence in the modern liturgy of exterior signs of reverence in the presence of God, such as kneeling, genuflection, silence, modesty of dress and behaviour etc.

As a hedonistic society cannot abide condemnations of the sins of the flesh, references to asceticism or self-mortification, or reminders of hell, these too had to be excised from the liturgy because they were deemed incompatible with the psychology of modern man. For the same reason anything too ornate or smacking of “Medievalism” was summarily dismissed.

Archbishop Piero Marini, Papal Master of Ceremonies and formerly Bugnini’s personal secretary, later made this very point with brutal frankness: “in view of the psychology of modern men and women, for which the mixture of court etiquette and religious rites is almost incomprehensible, it was decided that the sort of court life which had hitherto surrounded the Pope during liturgical celebrations should be done away with”. [245](#)

Effect of “depth psychology” on religious orders

The Assisi Address can be regarded as an invitation and incentive to reconfigure the methods of spiritual formation in the seminaries and religious institutions to include such subjects as psychology and social studies formulated by atheistic thinkers. It is significant that these curricular changes took place in some areas even before Vatican II officially imposed them for the formation of priests. [246](#) It is obvious, then, that Vatican II legitimized changes in this, as in other respects, that had received papal approval in the time of Pius XII.

But wherever humanistic psychology replaces spiritual discernment (the “psychology of the saints”), the result has been disastrous for religious vocations and has produced a situation from which the Church has still not

recovered. It brought havoc to Catholic religious orders in the US in the 1960s, because it encouraged individual autonomy and promoted the questioning of all authority, thereby challenging institutional hierarchies and their power to command obedience in matters of Faith and Morals.

Every religious order and seminary that had been “psychologically engineered” underwent a mass exodus of nuns and priests seeking “liberation” from their vows. They dug deep into their own psyches and emerged from their introspection with predictable conclusions: they no longer wanted to be bound by “rules” that prevented them from unleashing their libido. This happened in the first place to the Jesuits and then to the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in California, followed by the Franciscans, the Christian Brothers and many other men’s and women’s orders throughout the world. [247](#)

“Depth psychology”: a technique designed to modify behaviour and alter belief

Liturgists have been exploiting “depth psychology” in the liturgy for decades on a massive scale. Through the use of psychology, they thought they could re-programme individuals by influencing their subconscious minds, coercing them by stealth into accepting what they wanted them to accept, change the Church and control the future of the liturgy. To add insult to injury, those who refused to be thus coerced and adhered to the traditional liturgy were psychoanalyzed as suffering from a new form of mental disorder.

With his recommendation for depth psychology, Pius XII shifted the tectonic plates of the Church’s liturgical tradition. It may seem to some people a fairly inconsequential action but, as with tectonic shifts in the geological order, it takes only a move of a few feet to flatten whole cities.

11. PALM SUNDAY 1956: THE “CUTS”

We will now look at the manner in which ancient principles of the traditional Holy Week liturgy were sacrificed on the altar of Progressivism, and reflect on the tragic fact that Pius XII made this destructive agenda the basis of binding juridical norms for the whole Roman Rite.

Night of the Long Knives

This was accomplished on 16 November 1955 with the Decree *Maxima Redemptionis*. The members of Pius XII’s Liturgical Commission used the “*lingchi*” ²⁴⁸ strategy – a slow slicing (also known as “death by a thousand cuts”) rather than a single fatal blow – in their concerted attack on the traditional Holy Week rites. The reformers started by lopping off “medieval accretions” whether textual, ritual or ceremonial, topping and tailing the preparatory and concluding prayers of the Mass, paring to the bone the prayers of blessing, excising most of the Scriptural readings, gouging holes here and there in the ancient custom of the Roman Rite, and generally butchering the coherence of the whole.

From 1951 to 1955, the Holy Week ceremonies were subjected to cut after brutal cut, none of which was fatal in itself, until they were so attenuated that, like all *lingchi* victims, they scarcely resembled their former selves. This was the method by which those who were wielding the knives were attempting to prepare the faithful for the eventual abandonment of the traditional Mass.

It is of the greatest significance that the resulting Holy Week liturgy, which would later be incorporated into the 1962 Missal, was horribly dismembered and mutilated, its beauty disfigured, its dignity assailed, its order and structure wrecked, its own special identity transformed so as to appeal to modern man.

The connection between the Holy Week reforms and Paul VI’s New Mass

Before moving on to examine these “cuts” in all their gory detail, we must pause to consider that they were merely the prelude to worse atrocities, for what happened to the liturgy in 1969, with the introduction of the *Novus Ordo*, plumbed new depths of barbarity. The same methods were used, largely by the same people who operated in the Holy Week reform, but were applied in stages, via the 1962 Missal, to the whole of the Church’s liturgy.

That this was the intention of the reformers was confirmed by the German liturgist, Mgr Johannes Wagner, ²⁴⁹ Director of the Liturgical Institute of Trier. ²⁵⁰ Writing in 1959, he explained that the Holy Week reforms were the forerunner of the reform of the Mass itself:

“It has always been the desire of those working for a true renewal of the liturgy that it should, in its whole action, become meaningful again; a meaningful interplay, or, better, combined action and interaction of many, where each has his own non-interchangeable, non-transferable contribution to make, his own part to play. The new order of Holy Week shows many tendencies in this direction... [this reform] would indeed be **the beginning of the great renewal of the liturgy** which the Church needs. God grant it!” ²⁵¹ [emphasis added]

Leaving aside the inbuilt presumption of divine approval – which has always been a characteristic of the reformers – we cannot ignore the fact that Mgr Wagner had some personal involvement in the Liturgical Movement industry. The Institute he directed was responsible for publishing militant propaganda in favour of the Holy Week reforms and for organizing Congresses in Germany and abroad for the same purpose.

In 1950 the Institute organized the first German Liturgical Congress at Frankfurt, in 1951 the First International Congress of Liturgical Studies at Maria Laach, and in 1955 the second German Liturgical Congress at Munich. All put pressure on Pius XII for liturgical reforms, some of which were granted in his pontificate, the rest being only a matter of time before they materialized.

Where angels fear to tread ²⁵²

As we have seen, these Congresses called for, among other things, the elimination of much of the Roman Rite, the use of the vernacular and

“active participation” by the people. The reformers rushed in where even angels fear to tread by proposing to change the Canon of the Mass.

It is evident that the reformers who patronized the Congresses simply used the gatherings as proverbial “fishing expeditions” to trawl for any information, however biased or spurious, they could later use as false evidence for the “need” to dismantle the Church’s ancient liturgy.

In order to assess the extent of the damage done by Bugnini’s men to the Holy Week ceremonies of the ancient Roman rite, all we need is a pre-1955 Missal in one hand and a 1962 Missal (which contains the bulk of Pius XII’s reforms) in the other. A simple comparison will reveal the depredations of a progressivist culture twisting its knives deep into the entrails of the Church’s traditions. It will also serve to remind us that *lingchi* was not the sole preserve of the Chinese.

The blessing of palms on Palm Sunday

The first thing we notice in Pius XII’s reform (also in the 1962 Missal) is that the *Asperges*, which preceded every solemn Sunday celebration throughout the year, ²⁵³ has been dropped.

Regrettable though that may be, the significance of its loss hardly registers on the scale of destruction wrought on the ancient and venerable rite of the Blessing of Palms which preceded the Mass. It is important to know that the rite of blessing and the Mass together formed a monolithic structure which had remained solid and unchanged for many centuries; as such it was indivisible, an organized whole that exerted a powerful and influential force for spiritual good in the Church.

The destruction of the rite of blessing can be described, without exaggeration, as a total cliff face collapse of the traditional structure, as it was simply “scooped out” by the reformers. In the resulting landslide, as we shall see, many beautiful prayers and accompanying ceremonial, valued over the centuries for their power to move the soul and reinforce the Faith, were swept away.

How important was the traditional blessing of palms?

Dom Prosper Guéranger remarked with reference to this ceremony: “we may have an idea of its importance by the solemnity used by the Church in

this sacred rite”. ²⁵⁴ No greater token of its importance could be given than to enshrine the Blessing of Palms in a rite that is closely modelled on that of the Mass itself.

The pre-1955 rite began at the altar, on which the palms were laid; the sequence of texts corresponded to the Introit, Collect, Epistle, Gradual, Gospel, Secret, Preface, Sanctus and Postcommunion; the part of the rite corresponding to the Canon was filled with seven prayers of blessing of the palms, after which the clergy and the people would approach the altar, as they would at Communion time, to receive the blessed palms. This structure, with its obvious connection to the Holy Sacrifice, was abandoned by the 1955 Decree, thus turning the traditional rite overnight into a “museum piece”.

Now let us examine why our forefathers in the Faith considered these Palm Sunday ceremonies of such great importance (and, by implication, why the 1955 reformers who abolished them did not).

Even the briefest survey of its prayers and ceremonies, which is all that can be attempted here, would suffice to show that they were valued for their theological content, their poetic beauty, their expressive symbolism and their ability to move the soul to enter, through contemplation, into the mystery of Christ’s Passion. Their effect was enhanced when they were conducted against the backdrop of imposing architecture, magnificent vestments and the sublime strains of Gregorian chant. All of these elements combined to attract and edify both clergy and faithful for many centuries.

Theological content suppressed

The first casualty of the reform of the Blessing of Palms was the essential connection between the Passion of Christ and the institution of the Holy Eucharist.

- Before 1956, the texts of the liturgy gave an overview of salvation history, starting with the events of the Old Testament when the Israelites murmured against Moses and Aaron and God provided them with manna in the desert; they related Christ’s entry into Jerusalem as a figure of His triumph, through His Passion, over sin and death. The obvious analogy with the Eucharist is that God provides the Bread of Life on our altars through the Holy Sacrifice;
- In the traditional rite, the Gospel of the Palm Sunday Mass included the institution of the Eucharist, but this was cut out in 1956, as it was in all the Passion readings of the reformed Holy Week;

- To sever any visible connection with the Eucharist, the Blessing of Palms was no longer to be performed at the altar but on a table separated from it.

Secondly, Pius XII's reform abolished the Preface ²⁵⁵ which proclaimed Christ's authority over all the "kings and powers of this world", and the consequent duty of temporal governments to be subservient to Christ the King. The elimination of this doctrine from the ancient rite can, at the very least, be regarded as an affront to Pius XII's immediate Predecessor who had promulgated the Encyclical *Quas primas*, on the Kingship of Christ, in 1925. In that Encyclical, Pope Pius XI reaffirmed the unbroken teaching of previous popes that nations as well as individuals must submit themselves to the rule of Christ the King.

Indeed, the significance of this omission goes way beyond the issue of "simplification" of the liturgy. It can be considered as the first step in the Progressivists' campaign to promote the sort of "religious liberty" that would later surface at Vatican II.

Ten years later, in December 1965, *Dignitatis humanae*, Vatican II's Declaration on Religious Liberty, also suppressed the traditional papal teaching on the social reign of Christ the King – and with the promulgation of that Declaration, Church leaders ceased to teach that all rulers and statesmen have an obligation to give public honour and obedience to Christ. This perennial teaching of the Magisterium was rejected by Vatican II in order to open the Church to the values of the modern world. ²⁵⁶

The Social Kingship of Christ marginalized

The reformers cut out some of the Palm Sunday antiphons traditionally sung during the procession. They inserted others from the modern Latin translation of the Psalms rewritten by a committee of experts at the Pontifical Biblical Institute under the supervision of Cardinal Bea. This marked a complete break with tradition. Here we will deal only with one line: Psalm 46:9 which became in the Bea version: "*Deus regnat super nationes*" (God reigns over the nations).

The problem is that the Bea version, which is based on the Hebrew text, does not express the Christological context of the Psalm which was a prophecy about the future establishment of the Church when Christ would confer on her His spiritual authority over all individuals and nations. That is why the authentic Latin text found in the Vulgate Bible of St Jerome uses

the future tense: “*Regnabit Deus super nationes*” (God will reign over the nations).

The Bea translation which uses the Present tense “*regnat*” (He reigns) is, therefore, a falsification of the Latin Vulgate which has been handed down through liturgical use and interpreted by the Fathers of the Church.

When we come to the Hebrew text (which was also divinely inspired), we see that it uses the Perfect tense of the verb *malakh* (reign). Although the Perfect tense is normally associated with past events, in Hebrew it is more wide-ranging, and covers all time frames. Whether it embraces the past, present or future is revealed from its context.

Thus, for example, in Psalm 92:1 whose context is the foundation of the world by God, *malakh* is translated with reference to the past: “*Dominus regnavit*” (the Lord hath reigned). But in another context, it may refer to a future event.

Like many Old Testament prophecies, the Hebrew version of Psalm 46:9 uses the so-called “prophetic Perfect” tense to foretell a future event. In this context, the use of the future tense “*regnabit*” in the Latin Vulgate of the pre-1956 Missal is appropriate to illustrate the Old Testament prophecy of Christ’s Kingship when He would found the Church in the New. Thus the two Testaments are seen as inter-related in a unified and coherent whole; as St Augustine said: “the New Testament lies hidden in the Old, and the Old is fulfilled in the New”.

But this meaning was not made clear in the 1956 reform, as the Bea translation took advantage of the Hebrew system to interpolate a different meaning into Psalm 46:9.

Background to the mistranslation

There can be no doubt that Fr Bea understood the new meaning as being favourable for “Ecumenical” and inter-faith purposes i.e. for the promotion of “Religious Liberty”. As Rector of the Pontifical Biblical Institute, he took the unprecedented – and hitherto forbidden – step of participating in an Old Testament Congress in Göttingen in 1935, which had been organized by Protestant, Jewish and secular biblical scholars. ²⁵⁷ He must, therefore, have knowingly changed the translation to make it acceptable to those who refused to recognize the reign of Christ the King over all peoples and States.

It was precisely this teaching that the reformers cut out of the Palm Sunday liturgy, first from the Preface of the Blessing of Palms, and secondly from Psalm 46, which is itself a completely new insert. It is noteworthy that the Bea version is reproduced in the *editio typica* of the 1962 Missal promulgated by the Sacred Congregation of Rites on 23 June of that year. Curiously, with the exception of Baronius Press which has reproduced the 1962 Missal in strict accordance with the *editio typica*, other traditionalist publishers have changed “*regnat*” back to “*regnabit*”.

Ironically, Pius XII had stated in *Mediator Dei* §6: “Only a short while previously, with the design of rendering the prayers of the liturgy more correctly understood and their truth and unction more easy to perceive, We arranged to have the Book of Psalms, which forms such an important part of these prayers in the Catholic Church, translated again into Latin from their original text”.

The Preface of the pre-1956 Blessing of Palms shows the importance of this teaching to our age by revealing the theological foundation of the duty of temporal governments to be subservient to Christ the King. It was this teaching that the 1956 reformers excised from the liturgy of Palm Sunday, as they also did from the Good Friday liturgy with the abolition of the hymn, *Vexilla Regis*.

Where the suppression of the traditional doctrine in the 1956 liturgy was leading has become quite clear with the benefit of hindsight. Cardinal Bea’s influence on the documents of Vatican II concerning the Church’s relationship with other faiths was decisive. Paul VI would undermine the traditional teaching on the Kingship of Christ with his *motu proprio Mysteriorum Paschalis* in 1969. Whereas Pius XI had called on all nations to declare Christ as their King here and now, Paul VI gave a different message: abandon any prospect of the Social Kingship of Christ until the end of the world. [258](#)

This is in line with Vatican II’s teaching on “religious liberty”. For progressivists, the kingship of Christ is acceptable so long as its realization does not impinge on the political and social order of modern states, or on the Church’s mission to convert all nations, Christianize their cultures and influence their laws. But this is tantamount to banishing Christ from the public square. And people wonder why the Church’s missionary spirit has been extinguished.

The ancient rite of blessing the palms abolished

Of the seven traditional prayers for the blessing of palms, Pius XII's Commission abolished all except one, thereby expunging from the Holy Week liturgy a vital expression of the Church's doctrine on the efficacy of sacramentals.

According to Dom Prosper Guéranger, the blessing of the palms imparts a virtue to these branches and elevates them to the supernatural order. Thus, they become a means for the sanctification of our souls and a protection of our persons and dwellings. [259](#)

In these prayers, the sprigs of palm or olive, after they are blessed, are called a *sacramentum*, a "sacred sign" and a "saving remedy" signifying God's "protection of soul and body". God is further entreated that all who receive them "in the spirit of faith" and keep them in their homes may receive His blessing and protection, and that through their use the right hand of God may dispel all evil.

This is the clearest possible liturgical expression of the Church's teaching that the blessed palms, when used with a pious intention, are carriers of God's grace to man.

But the 1956 reformers, in their desire to bury this doctrine, used the following straw man argument to eliminate any mention of it in the liturgy:

"These pious customs [of the blessed palms], although theologically justified, can degenerate (as in fact they have degenerated) into superstition". [260](#)

In spite of the fact that the liturgy neither comes from nor leads to superstition, that was their crass justification for desacralizing the Palm Sunday rite of blessing by divesting the prayers of their supernatural status.

A creeping naturalism

Cutting these prayers out of the liturgy was bound to weaken any real sense of the significance of the supernatural in the lives of the faithful. The history of the liturgical reform has shown that this was just the start of a trend, culminating in *Novus Ordo*, in which the supernatural was steadily being peeled away. It is no wonder that belief in the Church as the mediator of divine grace has long since faded.

Quite predictably, the work of Pius XII's Commission gave rise to a vicious circle within the Church. For the temptation that followed the 1956 reform, and to which many have since yielded, was to reinterpret Faith and Morals to suit the prevailing secularization of the liturgy.

Old Testament symbolism discarded

We cannot but deplore the disappearance of the rich symbolism in the Palm Sunday liturgy which carries deep theological meaning. The traditional prayers mention a range of people and events in the Old Testament and show their connection with Christ's redeeming work, thus revealing the spiritual and mystical significance of the entire Holy Week. They present Moses, Aaron, the Israelites, Noah and the Ark as "types" or "shadows" prefiguring some aspect of God's plan of salvation fulfilled in the New Testament: liberation from the bondage of sin; the peace of God heralded by the dove carrying the olive branch; the Ark as the figure of the Church. Even the humble branches of palm and olive are mentioned in these prayers: the former as signifying Christ's victory over the prince of death ²⁶¹, the latter as prefiguring "spiritual unction" (sacramental grace) through Christ.

All of this typology was removed in 1956, reducing the Blessing of Palms to a perfunctory, one-prayer service displaying none of the scriptural depth, poetic beauty or mystical significance of the traditional rite. Cardinal Wiseman described these prayers of blessing as rich in poetry and dramatic appeal, and said that they "possess an elevation of sentiment, a force of expression and a depth of feeling which no modern form of supplication ever exhibits". ²⁶² He was, however, only one (albeit the most eloquent) among the countless Catholic souls who appreciated and were moved by these prayers before their relegation to the dustbin of history.

An ancient and much-loved ceremony abandoned

One of the most popular and memorable traditions in the unreformed Palm Sunday ceremonies took place after the distribution of the palms and was performed by the subdeacon who led the procession while carrying the veiled crucifix. After the clergy and faithful had processed outside the church to the sound of antiphons sung by the choir, the door was closed;

they could only regain admittance after the subdeacon had struck the door three times with the foot of the cross.

For those participating in the procession, this dramatic gesture carried deep theological meaning. It was a particularly vivid symbol signifying Christ's opening the gates of the New Jerusalem by His death upon the Cross and leading the faithful to their heavenly goal. Who could fail to understand or be impressed by the doctrinal significance of this simple gesture? Yet it was cast aside by the reformers as a worthless relic of the past instead of being cherished and transmitted to posterity as an inheritance from our forefathers in the Faith.

The reading of the Passion curtailed

In the 1956 reform (and consequently in the 1962 Missal), the Passion of St Matthew is considerably shortened by the deliberate omission of two key elements: the institution of the Eucharist and the guarding of the tomb of Jesus.

As regards the former, the Church included it on Palm Sunday and other days of Holy Week in order to make a doctrinal point unmistakably clear: that there is an essential bond between the Eucharist and the Passion. Or, in the words of St Thomas Aquinas: "The Eucharist is the perfect sacrament of Our Lord's Passion, as containing Christ crucified". [263](#)

The omission of what the Church had considered vital to our understanding of the Eucharist undermines the coherence of the entire Holy Week liturgy.

As for St Matthew's account of the guarded tomb, also omitted in 1956, its excision from the Palm Sunday liturgy was seriously detrimental to the Church for two reasons.

First, it furnished incontrovertible proof of the reality of Christ's Resurrection, while at the same time exposing the malice of the Jews who continued their persecution of Him even beyond His death. [264](#)

Secondly, as St Matthew was the only one of the four Evangelists to mention the guarding of the tomb, to expunge this passage meant that it would no longer have any place in the entire Roman Missal; it was just another case of the Liturgical Movement's "memory holes" swallowing up unwanted doctrinal facts and erasing them from the official records.

We have seen some, but by no means all, of the depredations [265](#) inflicted on the Palm Sunday liturgy which became operative in 1956, and have noted that they were undertaken at the expense of authentic Catholic values, doctrinal integrity, poetic beauty and appreciation of the Church's past achievements.

History has indeed shown that these reforms were not only the tip of the iceberg of an unrestrained pillaging and ransacking of the ancient Holy Week rite; but they were also the first steps in a deliberate attempt to demolish our common heritage and usher in an entirely new kind of liturgy – one which has not advanced the cause of Catholicism. It was a painful record of humiliation, defeat and loss for all the bishops, priests and lay people who protested to the Holy See at the time. They were simply left to rail in impotent anger.

Given the historical evidence, we are entitled to conclude that, in spite of protestations of good intentions by the liturgists, the reforms involved either an indifference to the nature of Catholic Tradition or a desire to eradicate it.

12. PALM SUNDAY 1956: THE “CULT OF NOVELTY”

One innovation begets another which begets another...

It is only when the details are examined that the revolutionary nature of the reforms becomes apparent. Now we shall see what new ideas were dreamt up by the reformers to replace what they had managed to purloin from the universal Church with the complicity of Pius XII.

The foremost issue was the “active participation” of the people, as Fr Frederick McManus, a major figure in the reform, explained as soon as the new Holy Week *Ordo* was issued in 1956:

“The rubrics of the *Ordo* refer constantly to the responses to be made by the members of the congregation and to their activity in the carrying out of the holy liturgy. This is of course a notable departure from the rubrical norms of the Roman Missal”. [266](#)

What is even more revolutionary is that responsibility for carrying out the liturgy now falls, by papal diktat and for the first time in the Church’s history, on the shoulders of the laity: their “active participation” is “made a matter of rubrical law and incorporated into the very text of the new liturgical book”. [267](#)

But when has the Roman Missal ever laid down rules to regulate how the faithful should respond during the liturgy? [268](#) Even Fr McManus had to admit that the traditional Missal was silent on the manner of lay participation.

Traditionally, it was the responsibility of the celebrant, not the laity, to “read the black and do the red” as printed in the Missal, under pain of penalty. There were also detailed instructions in the Missal for other ministers in the sanctuary in their respective roles, but none for the laity because they were not regarded as having a liturgical role to play.

But the liturgical reform, on the other hand, made it incumbent on the laity to give the responses and contribute actively to the performance of the liturgy. Pius XII simply introduced this ruling to please the reformers. The

impression was given that anyone praying silently in the pews during liturgical ceremonies would be guilty of breaking a law laid down by the Pope.

This revolutionary view was reinforced in the *General Instruction* of the *Novus Ordo* liturgy where it is stated that the faithful have a **duty** (§ 18) to become actively involved in the liturgy and they **must not refuse to do so**:

“The faithful, moreover, should not refuse to serve the People of God in gladness whenever they are asked to perform some particular service or function in the celebration”. (§ 97)

The “cult of novelty” in the Palm Sunday liturgy

The 1956 and 1962 Palm Sunday liturgy opens with a visual and (literally) shocking reversal of traditional practice. In order to reinforce the “community celebration” aspect, a portable table is set up in the sanctuary, the palms are laid on it, and the priest blesses them in full view of the people (“*in conspectu populi*”), all the while with his back to the altar and the Blessed Sacrament.

Reversing centuries of liturgical tradition, the 1956 *Ordo* of Palm Sunday mandated that the priest (or deacon) should conduct an audible “dialogue” with the people while facing them. After the opening Antiphon is sung, the celebrant, facing the people from behind the table, says *Dominus vobiscum*, to which all respond *Et cum spiritu tuo*. This took place at various points: before the blessing of the palms; both before and after the procession; before the Gospel; and at the *Orate Fratres* where the people are supposed to respond aloud.

But in the traditional rite, the priest remains at the altar, and is specifically instructed not to turn to the people (*non vertens se ad populum*) during this exchange: the response is given by another minister in the sanctuary.

Before the procession in the reformed rite, the deacon, facing the people, says *Procedamus in pace* (Let us go forth in peace), and the people respond *In nomine Christi* (in the name of Christ). This contrasts with the traditional Missal which instructs only the Choir (not the people) to sing the response. At the end of the procession, a new prayer was inserted, which is said by the celebrant while facing the people, and requires the response *Amen* from them.

Ironically, the procession in honour of Christ the King was revamped to exalt the role of the people in the liturgy. Now that the supernatural

significance of the subdeacon's role was eliminated, the way was open to enlarging the role of the laity.

Whereas in the traditional Missal the singing of the liturgy was the function of the priest and cantors alternating with the choir (as stipulated by Pope Pius X), in the new *Ordo* this suddenly became the responsibility of all.

The rubrics of the 1956 *Ordo* and the 1962 Missal indicate the parts to be sung by the choir and by the people. But the rationale for this can be seen in the spirit of rivalry on which it was based. Fr McManus explained the thinking behind this reform:

“When a choir chants those parts of Holy Mass or other rites which belong to the people, the faithful are not doing what they are appointed by their baptismal character to do – namely, worship God as members of Christ. In the restored Holy Week, the clear directions indicate again and again that the people should not be denied this right”. [269](#)

Thus, the congregation was required to sing not only during the blessing and procession of palms, but also throughout the entire Palm Sunday Mass. This included the *Kyrie*; *Et cum spiritu tuo* and *Amen* at the Collect; the entire Creed; *Et cum spiritu tuo* at the Offertory; *Amen* to the Secret; the responses at the Preface dialogue; the entire *Sanctus*; *Amen* after the Canon; *Sed libera nos a malo*, *Amen* and *Et cum spiritu tuo* at the *Pater Noster* and *Libera*; the *Agnus Dei*; *Et cum spiritu tuo* and *Amen* after the Postcommunion; *Et cum spiritu tuo* and *Deo gratias* at the dismissal; and *Amen* at the blessing. [270](#)

This introduced a novelty into the rubrics for sung Masses. Whereas Pius XII had encouraged – but not yet mandated – efforts in this direction (*Mediator Dei* §105), the *Graduale Romanum* issued by Pius X had not included instructions for congregational singing. [271](#)

A made-up prayer

Now let us consider another innovation in the Palm Sunday liturgy which was incorporated into the 1962 Missal, having been first introduced into the 1956 *Ordo*: the prayer after the procession which is said facing the people and to which they have to respond aloud. It was the result of a shambolic committee-work hastily cobbled together by Bugnini and his associates, and was problematic for two reasons.

Theologically speaking, the prayer was vague and ambivalent. It mentioned palm branches and God's blessing, but without establishing any intrinsic link between them, and spoke of our redemption being wrought by Christ's "right hand" (a phrase normally attributed to the Father). And, linguistically, it was expressed in somewhat garbled Latin. Judging by its varying translations, no one seems to know what exactly the prayer was supposed to mean. Evidently, the composers of the prayer have left everyone guessing.

The Bea Psalms - from optional to mandatory

An example of an unwarranted intrusion into the Palm Sunday liturgy – indeed into the whole of the 1956 Holy Week ceremonies – was the imposition of a new Latin version of the Psalms which had been undertaken, at Pius XII's request, by a committee of biblical experts headed by Fr Augustin Bea SJ.

This replaced St Jerome's *Vulgate* version of the Psalms which had been established as the universal and immemorial customary *lex orandi* (law of prayer) for the Latin Rite. Their authenticity was guaranteed by the Council of Trent on the basis of centennial custom, which is why the liturgical use of the *Vulgate* was regarded as sacrosanct, as we can see from the same Council's warning that "no one is to dare, or presume, to reject it under any pretext whatever". [272](#)

At first, it was only optional: in his *motu proprio Cotidianis Precibus* of 24 March 1945, Pius XII granted permission for the use of the Bea Psalter to priests and all who are obliged to say the Divine Office. And two years later he extended this permission for any liturgical use. [273](#) But in 1956 he integrated some of the new Psalms by force of law into the Holy Week ceremonies, an initiative that was nothing short of revolutionary. This innovation was yet another example of how Pius XII subordinated immemorial Tradition to papal authority on the basis of the subjective opinions of the reformers, in a manner that would be adopted by Paul VI on a comprehensive scale.

His reform gave rise to two major problems.

First, the new wording of the Bea Psalms, drawn from Classical Latin vocabulary and syntax, was different from the "Christianized" idiom of the *Vulgate* which the Church had adopted as the sacred language of the liturgy and which the clergy had been using for over 15 centuries.

Fr Bea despised the Latin recited by the clergy for so many centuries, and in the Introduction to the first edition of his New Psalter unjustly called it a “decadent usage” incapable of meeting the standards of Classical Latin. [274](#)

But there was no need to have an inferiority complex about it. As various classical scholars have shown, Medieval Latin was a direct descendant of the literary, learned Latin of the Classical age, not a debased or corrupt form of it. It was simply a common prejudice found among those who confuse *Vulgate* Latin with Vulgar Latin (the language once used by Roman soldiers, colonists and farmers). The classical scholar, Christine Mohrmann, explained: “Liturgical Latin is not Classical Latin, but neither is it, as is so often said, the Latin which was considered decadent by educated people”. [275](#)

It was this elevated form of Latin that the Church elaborated and adapted for use in Scripture and the liturgy, adding her own distinctive style and diction, to express the Christian message. And so there emerged the unique “Christianized” Latin which is found in the *Vulgate*. There the “family lineaments” of Latin Christianity are clear, revealing the Bea version as an interloper.

Even in Bea’s day, the prejudice against ecclesiastical Latin as *infima latinitas* (the lowest form of Latinity) was already outdated. This shows that he himself was behind the times and unwilling to acknowledge with pride the unique contribution of the *Vulgate* in the transmission of the Faith in the Church and in western culture.

Second, the Bea Psalms were ill adapted to Gregorian chant, making it awkward to sing in religious communities and providing a disincentive for them to do so. In the estimation of Church musicians, the new chants are unmelodious. Even when recited, the words do not exactly roll off the tongue, as with the traditional Psalter. That is because the authors of the new Psalter tried to force the natural rhythm of the *Vulgate* version to match the rhythm of Classical Latin poetry and its laws of “quantitative” meter. Unsurprisingly, the Bea Psalter was not a success; most of the religious communities refused to accept it. One of the few who did accept it was the Benedictine monastery of En Calcat in France. It was there, incidentally, that Dom Lambert Beauduin had spent some years of his banishment by Pius XI for his “ecumenical” activities and his opposition to any form of proselytism.

Furthermore, the words were not, in general, those used by their forebears in the Faith, and the new chants which had to be composed to match were not those that had echoed around the medieval monasteries. We can conclude that the Bea Psalms were not in harmony with the ancient Latin liturgical heritage and should have no place in the Roman Missal.

Little did Pius XII know that when he gave permission for the experimental Psalter, Fr Bea, as Fr Bugnini later recorded, was planning to extend the same principles to a revision of the entire Bible. Even more perversely, the plan was to use the revised version of the Scriptures in the liturgy. [276](#)

Thus, we can see how Pius XII began a process which had the gravest possible implications for future changes in the liturgy – the gradual detachment of the clergy from the worship, theology and spirituality of their Latin patrimony.

How respect for Tradition vanished

The 19th century Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, Nicholas Wiseman, has shown how the Holy Week services were “an aggregate of religious observances, gradually framed in the Church, not by a cold and formal enactment, but by the fervid manifestations of the devout impressions of every age, till they have acquired a uniform, consistent and compact form”. [277](#)

That was, of course, how the liturgy was formed in the early centuries until it reached a stage of such excellence as to be codified in that form by Pope Pius V. But it was otherwise with Pius XII whose “cold and formal enactment” of 16 November 1955 destroyed rites which have long been understood as the very heart and centre of the Church’s year.

“In attending them”, Cardinal Wiseman assured the faithful, “you may consider yourselves as led by turns to every period of religious antiquity... the same spirit has presided over the institution of them all. To abolish them, to substitute a new, systematic, formal and coldly meditated form, would be in truth a vandalism, a religious barbarism, of which the Catholic Church is quite incapable”. [278](#)

Who would have thought that in the very next century after His Eminence had spoken those fateful words, there would be popes, starting with Pius

XII, who proved quite capable of earning that shameful reputation in history?

Palm Sunday was only the opening gambit

The reformers did not limit their depredations to Palm Sunday. Their policy of cutting out traditional prayers and ceremonies and sewing on alien pieces turned the rest of Holy Week into a “crazy patchwork” of incongruous elements guaranteed to destroy the continuity and harmony of the traditional rites.

It is a remarkable fact that all the “cuts” had several salient effects and resulted in

- reducing the solemnity of the rites and the honour due to God;
- obscuring some doctrines of the Faith;
- minimizing the status of the priest;
- depriving the Holy week liturgy of some of its linguistic and musical heritage.

And all the extraneous patches that were tacked on had been fabricated by the reformers and had the effect of

- promoting the self-fulfilment of the laity through “active participation”;
- downgrading the liturgy to meet that alleged need.

We now know that the reformers willed these effects to occur and had planned them decades in advance while Pius XII actually took steps to bring them into existence. It is not clear, however, if Pius XII realized – though the reformers certainly did – that when he removed much of the mystical symbolism of the Holy Week rites and substituted innovations, he was creating prototypes of future reforms which would revolutionize the whole of the Roman Rite.

It is clear that these prototypes were the practical outcome of a coherent, integrated set of principles developed by the reformers to achieve the above-mentioned effects. But we must note that they did not apply them comprehensively to the Holy Week liturgy, but rather in a piecemeal fashion, and sometimes only as an option, so as not to provoke too strong a

reaction from the faithful and so endanger the future reforms which they had envisaged.

13. HOLY THURSDAY 1956: *MANDATUM AND TENEBRAE*

Before looking at the 1956 changes in the Sacred *Triduum* ceremonies (Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday), it would be useful to recall that the Church from Apostolic times to the 20th century never failed to maintain an attitude of reverence towards liturgical tradition, the reason being precisely that it was the vehicle for protecting the deposit of the Faith. Here the principle of *lex orandi lex credendi* applies: if the liturgy undergoes a radical alteration, so will the faith of the people.

The 19th century Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Vaughan, rejecting the liturgical changes made by Cranmer in the 16th century, explained the importance of the Catholic Church's adherence to its traditional liturgy:

“They must not omit or reform anything in those forms which immemorial Tradition has bequeathed to us. For such an immemorial usage, whether or not it has in the course of ages incorporated superfluous accretions, must, in the estimation of those who believe in a divinely guarded, visible Church, at least have attained whatever is necessary; so that in *adhering rigidly to the rite handed down to us*, we can always feel secure; whereas if we omit or change anything, we may perhaps be abandoning just that element which is essential. And this sound method is that which the Catholic Church has always followed...

That in earlier times local churches were permitted to *add* new prayers and ceremonies is acknowledged...but that they were also permitted *to subtract prayers and ceremonies in previous use and even to remodel the existing rites in the most drastic manner, is a proposition for which we know of no historical foundation and which appears to us incredible. Hence Cranmer, in taking this unprecedented course*, acted, in our opinion, with the most inconceivable rashness”. [279](#) [emphases added]

Fortunately for Cardinal Vaughan, he was spared the harrowing experience of witnessing a 20th century Cranmer, Archbishop Bugnini, wreaking unprecedented destruction on the immemorial Tradition of the Roman Rite with the support of reigning Pontiffs.

In our comparison between the pre-1956 Sacred *Triduum* ceremonies and the reform of Pius XII, we cannot fail to notice how many traditional elements were subtracted by the Liturgical Commission from the whole ensemble. These ranged from small (though not insignificant) details – such as the odd versicle or vestment plucked from the rites like petals from a rose – to whole swathes of ancient texts carved out of the Roman Rite as if by a scythe in the hands of a demented reaper.

We may well wonder at such a tactic which, at a blow, shattered the Church's millennial custom of prudent conservation. But there was method in the reformers' madness. Whether the "cuts" were major or minor, they had a rationale behind them. They were all part of a war of attrition being waged against the traditional liturgy, starting with the gutting of the Holy Week ceremonies which had given the clearest possible expression to the fundamental truths of the Catholic Faith.

These included the Holy Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, the fall of man, the heinousness of sin and its consequences, the history of our Redemption – all central mysteries of Christianity which had featured prominently in the traditional *Triduum* but which were either eliminated or minimized in the reform.

As we consider the details of the 1956 reform of the *Triduum*, let us keep in mind what the subsequent history of the liturgy has made clear – that it was the beginning of the break-up and diminution of the traditional *lex orandi*, the thin edge of the wedge driven into the Roman Rite by progressive reformers to separate the faithful from their spiritual and liturgical patrimony.

Why exclude the Holy Trinity?

It should not go unnoticed that when the new Holy Week rites were published in 1956, one of the antiphons sung during the *Mandatum* on Holy Thursday was strangely missing. The Liturgical Commission had excised it together with its corresponding versicle (Psalm 83:2). What was considered to be so objectionable about it? It had a similar theme and wording to the Introit of the Feast of Holy Trinity. ²⁸⁰ As every Mass is offered to the Holy

Trinity, this antiphon was a most fitting theme linking the *Mandatum* to the ordination of priests at the Last Supper. The *Novus Ordo* liturgy is now silent about this connection.

The Commission was intent on culling as much Trinitarian symbolism as possible in the traditional liturgy, as we can see, for example, in the disappearance of the triple candle used at the Easter Vigil and, in 1969, prayers to the Holy Trinity in the traditional Mass. [281](#)

The suppression of the Trinitarian antiphon indicates an underlying intention towards future developments in “Religious Liberty” when the *Mandatum* would eventually be open to people of all faiths. It could hardly be expected that Muslims, for example, would consent to have their feet washed to a hymn of praise to the Holy Trinity. Better to exclude the Holy Trinity, it was thought, than non-Christians.

Also significant was the loss of the versicle from Psalm 83:2 which accompanied the antiphon: “How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!” The prophet David, looking into the future and longing for heaven, foresaw something of the supernatural reality of heaven in the Church which Christ, by His constant Presence in her tabernacles, established on earth for our salvation.

It is not difficult to see what was problematic here for the reformers: the traditional *Mandatum* clashed with their idea of some nebulous, utopian “Supra-church”, to which all creeds apparently belong, as per Vatican II’s false teaching that non-Catholic religions are efficacious for salvation.

Nor is it surprising that since the 1956 reforms, the faithful have been continually shaken and rendered uncertain in their faith in the Church as the one Ark of Salvation, with the result that most Catholics have become either indifferent or hostile to this truth.

The background to the *Mandatum*

Now we will examine the background to a reform which did not arise spontaneously from the devotion of the people, and which nobody except the reformers wanted, and certainly no one requested or needed. Pius XII introduced a ceremony which had no precedent in the history of the Church: the washing of the feet of laymen during the Mass of Holy Thursday.

What is most disturbing about this innovation is that it originated from the most extreme wing of the Liturgical Movement, as Fr Hermann Schmidt SJ, Professor of Liturgy at the Gregorianum, Rome, candidly admitted:

“It was during the liturgical congress at Lugano in 1953 that we proposed, *not without opposition*, putting the foot washing after the chanting of the Gospel at Mass. ...It is a *new evolution in the history of the Mandatum*. ²⁸²
[emphases added]

The rubrics of the 1956 *Ordo* state that this can take place in the sanctuary (“*in medio presbyterii*”) after the homily. This is in marked contrast to the rubrics of the 1920 *Missale Romanum* which stipulate that after the stripping of the altars, the clergy gather together for the foot washing ceremony (*conveniunt Clerici ad faciendum Mandatum*). This was to take place in a specially designated area (*in loco ad id deputato*) which was usually a chapter house, a priest’s residence or a different part of the church building where the ceremony could be performed in privacy and without the participation of laymen.

The first point to note about Pius XII’s innovation is the cacophony of symbols it presents. In fact, when viewed against the backdrop of liturgical tradition, the whole ceremony abounds in anomaly.

This was the first papally-sanctioned use of the sanctuary for the purposes of “active participation” by the laity. It may have seemed a small concession in 1956; and few people then realized the threat such an innovation posed to the priesthood. But history has shown that it acted as a snowball that gathered an unstoppable momentum until, with the proliferation of lay ministries in the liturgy in the 1970s, it completely submerged the uniqueness of the ordained priesthood.

The traditional understanding of the *Mandatum*

As part of the liturgy of Holy Thursday, the *Mandatum* was, according to longstanding tradition, a ritual performed among priests, based on Christ’s example of washing the feet of the twelve Apostles at the Last Supper. It is not to be confused with the so-called “*Mandatum* of the Poor”, an entirely separate ceremony which existed alongside its clerical counterpart. Whereas the latter included laymen, the former was a discreet service performed by clerics and for clerics away from the public gaze. Up to 1956, there was no official approval for either form of ablution to take place in the sanctuary or during the Mass of Holy Thursday.

It was always understood to be a ritual re-enactment of the actions of Christ when He washed the feet of the twelve Apostles to make them

worthy of priestly service at the altar. They would have been aware of the significance of the occasion: the fulfilment of the Old Testament ceremony of foot washing as a prerequisite for offering sacrifice at the altar. (Exodus 30:17-21) Our Lord explained that He was giving them a “part” in His priestly ministry. (John 13:8)

The theological symbolism of the traditional ceremony spoke volumes about its meaning: it was a commemoration of the priesthood on the anniversary of its institution, and thus intimately related to the Sacrament of Holy Orders. We will need to bear this in mind when we come to consider the inclusion of laymen in 1956 (and later lay women) into the ceremony.

The history of the Liturgical Movement has shown how the harmful nature of the reforms is never more sharply exposed than over the issue of lay “active participation” and the consequent steady diminution of the priesthood. The 1956 reform of the *Mandatum* is a good example of this baneful process, as it illustrates the reformers’ strategy of deconstructing a liturgical ritual and subverting its principles.

Clericalizing the laity

Theologically, there ensued some adverse results which could have been foreseen and avoided. By giving lay people privileges to enter the sanctuary and therein perform liturgical functions hitherto reserved for the clergy, Pius XII opened the way to undermining the role of the ordained ministers. It was inevitable that the effect of this radical innovation would not only help blur the clearly defined distinction between the priest and the non-ordained members of the Church, but also create confusion over the architectural expression of that distinction: the sanctuary for the clergy and the nave for the people. And it is equally obvious that this weakened concept of the priesthood would, in turn, lead to the re-ordering of churches or the building of new ones to express the “new theology” which exalted the laity and diminished the role of the priest.

In short, the reformed Holy Thursday rite fails to invoke the spiritual connections that were inherent in the traditional liturgy and its supporting architecture, both of which helped reinforce what the ordained priesthood means. It is also clear that this particular reform went hand in hand with the progressivists’ revolutionary ideas of what a church is, how it should function and what message it should proclaim – the “democratization” of the People of God.

Before looking further into the phenomenon of lay people having their feet washed in the sanctuary, it would be useful to keep in mind the sort of thinking among the progressivists that led up to it. Ever since Beauduin launched his famous dictum at the Malines Conference in 1909 about “active participation” as the *right* of the laity, his slanderous accusation gained ground that a dominating clergy had for centuries been unjustly depriving lay people of their rightful role in the liturgy through the Liturgical Movement.

When Pius XII came to the defence of the so-called lay “victims” by granting them more active roles in the liturgy, he was not only lending support to the reformers’ clerical-lay conflict theory, but also unwittingly creating conflict in and among the ranks of the clergy. There were voices raised not only among the clergy but also the laity against the various reforms of Holy Week. Where all this was leading to was the perfect Marxist-style *bellum omnium contra omnes* (war of all against all) which would be played out at Vatican II.

The reformers by-passed the significance of the *Mandatum*

In this they were aided by the Instruction issued by the Sacred Congregation of Rites and which accompanied Pius XII’s Decree *Maxima Redemptionis* introducing the Holy Week reforms in 1955. This Instruction, together with the rubrics of the 1956 *Ordo* of Holy Week, acted as a sort of “game-changer” by introducing a new element into the *Mandatum* that would produce a significant change in its meaning. All the Instruction says about the foot washing is that it is a demonstration of Christ’s “fraternal love” and an example for the faithful to engage in acts of “Christian charity”. [283](#)

The inclusion of laymen (“*viri selecti*”) in what had hitherto been an all-clerical ceremony completely changed the way future generations of Catholics thought about Christ’s actions at the Last Supper when He washed the feet of His Apostles.

Small wonder that so many have lost sight of the fact that the original *Mandatum* was not intended for Christ’s followers in general, but only those whom He had personally called to the priesthood. How, then, could laymen be said to represent the Apostles in a ceremony that was meant to

commemorate the institution of Holy Orders and the exercise of the priestly ministry?

The “*Mandatum* of the poor”

Historical sources dating from the 7th century show that this was a ceremony conducted by religious Superiors who washed the feet of a group of poor men (clerical or lay) on Maundy Thursday and often accompanied this gesture with a gift of food, clothing and/or money. In medieval times, this ceremony was usually carried out by the pope in his private apartment, by bishops in the chapter house, and also by abbots in the refectory of their monastic houses.

It is important not to confuse this ancient tradition with the strictly liturgical ceremony which was part of the Mass of Holy Thursday. It was simply an act of humility and service on the part of those who held high office in the Church

Ratcheting up the reform

To bestow this privilege upon laymen could only threaten to undermine the identity by which the priesthood is defined. This was an early phase of the reformers’ end-game strategy. With it they turned the ratchet of liturgical confusion another notch. Having first stigmatized all priests as “elitist” who said the Mass in its entirety while the congregation remained silent, they turned the ratchet by promoting vocal participation as a “right” of the laity to say Mass with the priest. They turned it again when they persuaded Pius XII to allow laymen to enter the sanctuary and stand in the place of priests.

Thus, a precedent was set in 1956 for the post-Vatican II introduction of “lay ministries” to supplant the traditional role of the priest. Pius XII’s promotion of the foot washing of the laity became the emblem of the liturgical chaos that undermined the role of the priest. It matters not that the ceremony was only optional at the time; its consequences were far reaching.

Once the principle had been breached and the essential meaning lost, secularism made its way into the ranks of the priesthood and even into the sanctuary, the “holy of holies” where priests always exercised their exclusive ministry. Consequently, that which is supernatural and transcendent was made to yield to the democratic spirit of the modern age and adapt itself to an earthly end.

Hence the liturgical free-for-all we see today where literally everyone and anyone can have their feet washed in the name of equality, diversity and inclusiveness. As a result, the *Mandatum* has now turned into a political platform for immigration and other fashionable shibboleths, making a mockery of liturgical law, spirituality and tradition.

Absurd though it may be, this is just the logical conclusion of having reinvented the *Mandatum* as community service, with the priest as social worker. Thus, we have arrived at a point where the priesthood is no longer honoured in this rite as a supernatural benefit to the Church – as it had been so honoured since the early Middle Ages – but only insofar as it furthers the ideology of “equality” for all.

To illustrate this point, the US Bishops’ Committee for Divine Worship issued a statement in January 2016 condoning their longstanding departure from liturgical law. Quoting from a 1987 document in which they had included women in the foot washing ceremony, they stated:

“While this variation may differ from the rubric of the Sacramentary which mentions only men (“*virī selecti*”), it may nevertheless be said that the intention to emphasize service along with charity in the celebration of the rite is an understandable way of accentuating the evangelical command of the Lord, “who came to serve and not to be served”, that all members of the Church must serve one another in love”.

Whence the idea of the *Mandatum* as a sign of general service?

It is true that the first Christians undertook this task among themselves as a simple act of charity, recommended by St Paul (1 Tim. 5:10). Most Catholics who have attended a Holy Thursday foot washing service would, if asked, be inclined to explain its significance in a manner not dissimilar to Protestants – that is, as a symbol of the charity and humble service that all Christ’s followers must practise towards one another. That is what the *Mandatum* has now been reduced to – an exhortation to mutual aid: you wash my feet, I’ll wash yours, metaphorically speaking.

This impression has no doubt been induced by the sight of a preponderance of laymen upstaging the clergy in the sanctuary to have their feet washed. It came originally from Pius XII’s – or rather the Liturgical

Commission's – 1955 Instruction which gave a secular twist to the *Mandatum* by presenting it as a charter for general benevolence.

That was not, however, how it was perceived throughout the history of the liturgy, particularly by Patristic writers and medieval theologians, none of whom taught that Christ's action of washing His disciples' feet was a sign of indiscriminate service to mankind, as is commonly taught today.

St Jerome (Epistle to Pope Damasus) stated that the purpose of Christ's washing of His Disciples' feet was to prepare them for their duty to preach the Gospel; St Ambrose (*De Sacramentis* Book 3, Chapter 1) saw the foot washing as an "aid of sanctification" for the Apostles to resist the assaults of the Devil and concupiscence so as to lead lives of purity befitting their ministry. St Augustine (Commentary 56 on the Gospel of John 13:6-10) saw it as a means of purification from contact with earthly things so that their hearts may be "turned upwards toward the Lord" and "enabled to dwell in His presence". This same theme of purification of the soul was used by St Bernard, St Cyprian and St Gregory in their interpretation of the foot washing at the Last Supper.

If humble service, such as the corporal works of mercy or helping the disadvantaged, was all that Christ had in mind, the Apostles would have become glorified social workers. But in the Acts of the Apostles we find them specifically rejecting this interpretation in favour of the highest service which Christ had intended for them at the *Mandatum*, that of the priesthood: "Then the twelve, calling together the multitude of the disciples, said: It is not right that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables... But we will devote ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word". (Acts 6:2, 4)

It has always been understood that the priesthood of Aaron and the Levites in the Old Testament – all of whom underwent ritual foot washing before service at the altar – was a prefiguring of the *Mandatum* when Christ prepared His Apostles to become priests of the New Covenant by washing their feet. It was because of this understanding that the Church Fathers gave the *Mandatum* a mystical interpretation, one which required the Apostles to be cleansed from sin and made like unto Christ.

In other words, the ancient liturgical custom of the *Mandatum* was about the status and identity of the priest as *alter Christus*. Its exclusive nature as an all-clerical ceremony, as preserved in the traditional Holy Thursday rite, was intended to illustrate this identification of bishops and priests as "other

Christs” – which explains why it was distinct from any other kind of foot washing that existed in Church history.

The only explanation, then, that makes liturgical sense is the traditional, hierarchical one: the successors of the Apostles imitate Christ by washing the feet of the clergy who are subject to them: priests, deacons, subdeacons, canons and monks.

A faux symbolism

That was the situation until 1956 when Pius XII’s Commission altered the complexion and meaning of the *Mandatum* by allowing laymen to replace the clergy. It was a calculated decision of the reformers, motivated by their antipathy to the hierarchical nature of the Church, and made with full awareness of the likely consequences. Unsurprisingly, it played into the hands of those who challenged the exalted status of the ministerial priesthood. Yves Congar stated:

“We are still far from drawing the consequences of the rediscovery of the fact that the entire Church is one single People of God and that the faithful compose it along with the clergy. Implicitly, unwillingly, and even unconsciously, we have the idea that the Church is composed of the clergy, and that the faithful are merely their beneficiaries or clientele. This horrible conception is inscribed in so many structures and customs that it appears to be set in stone, unable to change. It is a betrayal of the truth. There is still much to be done to de-clericalize our conception of the Church”. [284](#)

Pope Francis seconded this with his obliquely accusatory statement that lay people are not “second class members” of the Church. [285](#) Progressivists thrive on this kind of cryptic ambiguity created by the proponents of the “new theology” in order to accuse the Church of having lost the truth, and to blur the ontological distinction between the clergy and the laity.

We cannot fail to notice that, as a result of this reform, the focus of the *Mandatum* was suddenly switched to the Protestant “priesthood of the laity”, while that of the ordained minister is constantly being undermined.

Indeed, there is clear evidence of this in Vatican II’s promotion of the laity to official positions in the Church traditionally occupied by priests. From being a privileged institution on account of its fundamental role in building the Church – the first Apostles were, after all, its nucleus – the priesthood has passed into a kind of limbo, deliberately marginalized as a function of

no great consequence, just one of those myriad “jobs” to be performed by the faithful, to which they are allegedly entitled by reason of their common Baptism.

The elimination of *Tenebrae*

Among the liturgical treasures of Holy Week targeted by the reformers was the ancient service of *Tenebrae* (a Latin word meaning darkness) – so called because of its gradual extinguishing of lights – which had a continuous history of use in the Church since at least the 7th century until 1956. Yet many Catholics today have not the slightest notion that such a service ever existed in the Church, let alone what it entailed or what it was meant to signify, so great were the reformers’ efforts to keep them, in quite another sense, in the dark.

Tenebrae consisted of two components of the Divine Office, Matins and Lauds, which originated from the monastic liturgy and were chanted by the monks after midnight and before dawn respectively. But from the early Middle Ages, the Church, wishing to make these “hours” available during Holy Week at a more convenient time for the faithful, joined them into one single service to be performed on the Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday evenings, thus anticipating Matins and Lauds of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday.

The distinctive character of *Tenebrae*

The traditional service was characterized by a number of special features which gave it a striking figurative power, making it an unforgettable experience for the faithful. This was achieved by a unique interplay between light and darkness, sacred texts and chant which moved those present to the very depths of their soul. And it was rich in scriptural passages bearing theological, mystical and allegorical meanings that had been specially chosen to arouse feelings of grief and compassion for the sufferings of Our Lord, and consequently of sorrow and detestation of sin which was their cause.

The whole service was conducted in an atmosphere of solemn mourning. The Lamentations of Jeremiah were sung in the so-called *Planctus* (“weeping”) tone specific to certain parts of Holy Week which, however, fell out of favour after 1955. Together with the responsories, antiphons and Psalm 50 (*Miserere*), they are universally recognized as the most sublime

examples of choral music in the Church's repertoire, made famous by celebrated composers e.g. Palestrina, Allegri, Victoria and Tallis.

The ceremony was usually timed to begin in the early evening, when the natural light was fading from the sky, and to end in complete darkness. The main source of illumination in the church was candle light, and all eyes were directed to 6 candles on the main altar and 15 on a triangular candlestick called a *hearse*, ²⁸⁶ symbolizing the Holy Trinity. After each Psalm was chanted (9 for Matins, 5 for Lauds), one of the candles on the *hearse* was extinguished, leaving the one at the apex (representing Christ) still burning. While the canticle known as the *Benedictus* was chanted at the end of Lauds, the six candles on the high altar were also extinguished sequentially, alternating from side to side. Near the end of the ceremony, two dramatic, highly charged with theological significance, events were enacted.

First, the "Christ candle" was removed and temporarily hidden behind the altar, plunging the whole sanctuary into darkness – a symbolic reminder of what it is like to be deprived of Christ, the Light of the World. (John 8:12)

Second, the sudden irruption of the *strepitus* (Latin for a loud noise) produced by banging books against the pews, filled the darkness. It was meant to invoke the earthquake that happened after the Crucifixion, the convulsion of nature that accompanied the death of its Author. Lastly, the "Christ candle" was reinstated on the *hearse* as a sign of the Resurrection, and all departed in silence.

The fate of the *Miserere*

It may be difficult to believe, but Psalm 50 – the *Miserere* – was almost completely eliminated from the Divine Office of the entire *Triduum*. As a mark of its importance in the spiritual life of the Church, it used to be said both at the beginning and at the end of Lauds, as well as at the end of all the Hours of the *Triduum*. But the reform prohibited its recitation at the conclusion of all the Hours of the *Triduum*, leaving only the one at the beginning of Lauds. This order was given in *Ordo Hebdomadae Sanctae* (The New Order of Holy Week) published by the Sacred Congregation of Rites in January 1956. Thus, the reform greatly restricted the frequency of the *Miserere* – the most penitential of all the Psalms.

Such dismissive treatment relayed the message that the Psalm could and should be sidelined. This practically banished Allegri's *Miserere* which, in

the words of Cardinal Wiseman, was capable of “leaving on the soul a solemn impression of harmonious feeling which no words I have could describe”. [287](#)

Ironically, in spite of being sabotaged in 1956, Allegri’s *Miserere* has maintained its appeal outside the Church, not only in Anglican and Lutheran services of *Tenebrae* but most especially in the concert hall where it continues to enjoy worldwide acclaim.

Its restriction was bound to have profound implications for the Catholic moral life, far beyond the loss of its cultural or musical value. It is not without significance that the *Miserere* was David’s prayer of repentance and plea for forgiveness after his adultery with Bathsheba.

As the liturgy is, in accordance with the adage *lex orandi lex credendi*, the prophetic witness of the Church’s faith, it not only speaks – or, in this case, sings – what God has appointed us to believe, but also encourages us to live a life of holiness in obedience to the Divine Commandments.

Unfortunately for the faithful who had been attracted and edified by the *Miserere*, its doctrinal impact was weakened when it was almost entirely eliminated from the *Triduum*. The current failure to address moral issues concerning the 6th Commandment, particularly adultery, from a Catholic perspective can be traced back to its origin in the 1956 reforms.

Before the 1956 reforms, *Tenebrae* was widely celebrated in the Church and was well attended by lay people in cathedrals, abbeys and parish churches where there was an ample supply of clergy. Nevertheless, the reformers arranged for its demise by an astonishingly simple strategy: changing its time of celebration. The Decree *Maxima Redemptionis* prohibited anticipating the combined Office of Matins and Lauds (i.e. *Tenebrae*) on the previous evenings of the *Triduum*. The only exception envisaged in the Decree was in cathedrals where the Mass of Chrism was said on Holy Thursday morning; Matins and Lauds could be anticipated on the Wednesday evening.

The wording of the document was ambiguous: “*mane, hora competenti*” can be translated as either “in the morning at a suitable time”, presumably for the convenience of the laity to attend in daylight hours; or “in the morning at the proper hour”, which would mean reverting to the original monastic hours after midnight and before dawn, in which case the combined Office of *Tenebrae* would disappear from the liturgy.

When the time was switched to the morning hours, this effectively threw the proverbial spanner into the work of centuries, for *Tenebrae* performed in the morning not only destroys its coherence as a nocturnal Office but also the “atmospherics” of darkness on which its powerful symbolism relies in order to create the right mood. Daylight *Tenebrae* is, of course, a misnomer, and has never been a custom in the Church.

The self-contradictory nature of this reform is also evident in the same Decree which, in criticism of the traditional *Triduum*, stated that “all these liturgical solemnities were pushed back to the morning hours; certainly with detriment to the liturgy’s meaning”. How could the reformers complain when that is exactly what they did to the Office of *Tenebrae*?

False rivalry between the Mass and the Divine Office

The ostensible reason for displacing *Tenebrae* was that the Holy Thursday Mass should be celebrated in the evening to correspond with the time of the Last Supper. Yet for many centuries prior to 1956, this Mass had been said in the morning – the reformers scoffed that it was the “Mass of the Lord’s Breakfast” – and the Decree accused the traditional Holy Week schedule of creating “confusion between the Gospel accounts and the liturgical representations referring to them”.

This was the first time in the history of the Church that an official document of the Holy See stood in judgement against its own approved tradition which had been hallowed by centuries of usage, and condemned it as detrimental to a right understanding of the Holy Week liturgy. It was a barely concealed rallying cry for a liturgical revolution to usher in a “new understanding” of the Faith.

Is there a “proper” time of the day?

It might be useful to reflect that the Church had set the *Triduum* apart from the rest of the liturgical year as a specially consecrated season with its own traditional time-frame for the ceremonies. This was the *status quo* with which the Catholic faithful were familiar for centuries up to 1956.

The reformers argued that *Triduum* ceremonies can only be considered truly “authentic” if their timing corresponds with that of the biblical events they commemorate. Thus, the Holy Thursday Mass *must* be in the evening,

the Good Friday liturgy *must* take place at 3 p.m., and the Easter Vigil *must* start after sundown – as if it were just a commemoration of historic events, like the “11th hour” of Armistice Day.

But this rests on a false premise, that of the so-called *veritas horarum* – the intrinsically “proper” time of the liturgy – a concept that has only ever applied to the Divine Office and its different “hours” for sanctifying the day. Ironically, they failed to apply this principle to the Office of *Tenebrae*.

Liturgical chaos

It is commonly thought that the 1956 reform was successful in “restoring the liturgy to its authentic times”. But in the highly partisan agenda of the Liturgical Movement, “authentic” meant returning to early Christian practices and rejecting the traditional liturgy of centuries.

The reformers managed to commandeer the public liturgy of the Church by dictating a sweeping change in the traditional norms of the *Triduum* ceremonies – indeed to destroy the very notion of traditional norms at all. They accomplished this by investing their *veritas horarum* with the character of an “absolute” that overrode every other consideration – the force of custom, the rights of Tradition, or the wishes of the faithful. As *all* the services, in their estimation, had to be rearranged, the result was a total upheaval of the traditional schedule, which dealt a crippling blow to the *Triduum* ceremonies.

As soon as the reform of Holy Thursday was published, Cardinal Spellman of New York, in a letter to Pius XII, stated:

“It is my certain knowledge that those who applauded the Decree are in the very definite minority, while the bishops and priests of my own region are appalled at the confusion that will be caused by the application of such a revolutionary edict”. [288](#)

To add to the confusion, some who follow the 1962 Missal hold *Tenebrae* services in the mornings of the *Triduum*, while others adopt the pre-1956 custom of having them in the evenings.

We have seen how *Tenebrae* was given short shrift by the reformers – even though it was part of the Divine Office – and subsequently fell by the wayside. Many traditional devotions were also sidelined in the reshuffle. Judging by these results, we can conclude that the purpose of “absolutizing” the concept of the *veritas horarum* was to isolate the *Triduum* from its

dependence on Tradition. In this the strategy was eminently successful, but we must disagree with Pius XII who personally congratulated the reformers at the Assisi Congress.

Goodbye Allegri's *Miserere*, hello *Eagles' Wings*

Another “absolute” was the “active participation” of the laity, to which everything else had to be subordinated. Fr McManus’s explanation of the 1956 reform amply bears out the truth of this fact when he stated:

“the trained choir may lead and encourage the people – and above all, never seek to restrict the participation of the faithful. If on occasion this means that the responses, for example, may not be sung perfectly, the act of worship on the part of the assembled people will nevertheless be pleasing to almighty God. And the strong and united worship of the whole Church must never be subordinated to technical perfection of music”. [289](#)

But giving priority to aesthetically poor performances heralded the end of the Church’s authentic musical tradition, its Gregorian chant, sacred polyphony and great masterworks sung by trained choirs.

***Tenebrae* desacralized**

In recent times, there has been a resurgence of interest in *Tenebrae* as a “novelty”, and some *Novus Ordo* parishes have staged their own performances of it, but without any experience or knowledge of its true nature. Modern *Tenebrae* can only be described as a miscreation – in every respect it is to the traditional *Tenebrae* what the *Novus Ordo* is to the traditional Mass, that is, a travesty. For it fails to represent the values and qualities of the original, and is often performed in a manner that is shocking and offensive to Tradition.

Modern *Tenebrae*, where it is performed, is celebrated in the vernacular with maximum “active participation” of the laity, and neither looks nor sounds like the original. The readers enter the sanctuary, do their assigned readings facing the people who respond, extinguish one of the candles and rejoin the congregation to sing ecumenical hymns. [290](#) The texts are altered and interspersed with improvised material more congenial to the spirit of the times. There are even “disco style” performances for the young, complete with coloured lights and guitars.

14. GOOD FRIDAY 1956: NO “MASS OF THE PRESANCTIFIED”

Another example of an ancient and venerable Holy Week ceremony abolished in the 1956 reform was the final part of the Good Friday liturgy known as the “Mass of the Presanctified”. The last time it was celebrated in the Roman Rite was 8 April 1955, after which it suffered a *damnatio memoriae* ²⁹¹ by official decree. It is understandable that Crammer eliminated it in the 16th century because he wanted to eradicate all its identifying marks and cancel every trace of its existence. But for this to happen under Pius XII is beyond comprehension.

Before dealing with the chain of events that led up to its abolition, let us keep in mind a few facts about the “Mass of the Presanctified” which aroused intense disapproval among the reformers.

As no Mass is celebrated on Good Friday, an ancient tradition developed incorporating some of the prayers, gestures, and vestments of the Mass, but without the Consecration. Holy Communion was not distributed, as the sole recipient of the Sacrament was the priest. He consumed a Host which had been previously consecrated (hence “presanctified”) at the Holy Thursday Mass and reserved at the Altar of Repose. Thus, he could, as it were, prolong the experience of the previous day’s Mass at one remove.

The Altar of Repose downgraded

As a mark of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and a reflection of Catholic piety throughout the centuries, individual churches vied with each other to make their Altars of Repose a resplendent repository decorated with ornate hangings made from precious materials, banks of flowers and a blaze of lights. But an Instruction from the Holy See poured cold water on this fervent competition by describing the custom as an “abuse” and recommended that it should be simplified to the point of a more befitting “severity”. ²⁹²

The rationale behind this reform was explained by one of the reformers. Such a “triumphalist” display of honour to the Blessed Sacrament belonged

to the Counter-Reformation era and was an affront to modern (read ecumenical) sensibilities. [293](#)

The whole symbolism of the “Mass of the Presanctified” illustrated the essential link between the Last Supper, Calvary and the exalted status of the priest as an *alter Christus*. It was a shining example of how the *lex orandi* supported the doctrine of the Mass and the priesthood, reinforcing in the priest’s mind that his Ordination, as St Thomas Aquinas taught, draws its significance and purpose from the Eucharist.

So when the reformers demanded that the rite should be scrapped, alleging it was a useless formality and had been “introduced without reason”, [294](#) they could not have been further from the truth. They failed to appreciate that the reason for the symbolism was to give access to mysteries of the Faith that would be otherwise inaccessible to the human mind. For the more symbolic gestures point to the numinous, the better we can approach transcendent realities; and the more they are curtailed, the less we surpass the domain of this world.

In fact, the “Mass of the Presanctified” is entirely composed of symbols of the sacred. First, there was a solemn procession in which the priest, accompanied by all his ministers, went to the Altar of Repose to fetch the pre-consecrated Host. This had been placed in a chalice specially prepared during the Mass of Holy Thursday after the priest had consecrated two large Hosts, only one of which he consumed, the other being destined for his Communion on Good Friday.

The unconsumed Host had been placed in a chalice covered with an upturned paten and a silk veil which was tied at the node, and taken in solemn procession after the Holy Thursday Mass to the Altar of Repose.

In the “Mass of the Presanctified” having fetched the pre-consecrated Host, the priest returns to the main altar, preceded by two acolytes walking backwards as they incense the Blessed Sacrament, while the choir sings the *Vexilla Regis*.

The Blessed Sacrament minimized

But after the reform, all this disappeared. The priest was denied his rightful privilege of carrying the Blessed Sacrament. He was instructed to sit while the task was performed by a lesser minister. (Now we have reached the point where it is done by anyone at all, including children). Also, he was denied the unique privilege of receiving Communion from the large Host

(which was itself abolished for Good Friday), and was made to receive a small one instead, on a par with the people.

This slight to the dignity of the priest and to traditional norms of the liturgy was noted and commented upon at the time:

“It is disrespectful to the liturgy and the celebrant to abolish the chalice and the large Host. A small people’s Host is ridiculous”. [295](#)

The incensing of the Blessed Sacrament and the singing of the choir were abolished, and the rather deflated procession took place in silence. We can see in this reform the beginning of a slippery slope that ended in today’s less-than-reverent treatment of the *Sanctissimum*.

Why the *Vexilla Regis* should not have been abolished

As for the *Vexilla Regis* – the famed Hymn of the Cross *par excellence* – it was excised in spite of its intrinsic worth and its right to honour which immemorial and universal usage had given it.

The logic of assigning the *Vexilla Regis* to the Good Friday procession is clear from several points of view:

- it started life as a processional hymn when it was first sung in 569 during the reception of a Relic of the True Cross by Queen St Radegund for the consecration of her Abbey of the Holy Cross in Poitiers;
- it sings of the splendour and triumph of the Cross from which Christ rules over all nations – hence its relevance to the Reign of Christ the King;
- composed by St Venantius Fortunatus when the foundations of Europe were being laid, it has particular significance for the Church’s subsequent and beneficial influence on the history and formation of Western society;
- it illustrates the essential bond between the Eucharist and the Cross, which is also the theme of the “Mass of the Presanctified”.

Good Friday eclipsed by the “Paschal Mystery”

It was characteristic of Modernism that mixed and muddled positions are proposed and defended, thus muddying the waters and impeding a clear perception of the truth. Already by 1955 the new theology of the “Paschal

Mystery” was being promoted to distract attention from, and even replace, the unchanging and objective meaning of the Mass as essentially the Sacrifice of the Cross. The new theology conflated three concepts – the Passion, Resurrection and Ascension – and made all three serve as a single explanation of the Redemption under the heading of the “Paschal Mystery”. When applied to the Mass (with particular reference to Good Friday), this obfuscation gave the impression that Christ’s Passion and Death on the Cross was not in itself the efficient cause of the Redemption of mankind.

But this runs counter to the teaching of the Council of Trent which has defined infallibly that the cause of the Redemption is Jesus Christ, wrought through “His Most Holy Passion on the wood of the Cross”. With the theological inversion contained in the “Paschal Mystery” trope, the road to the *Novus Ordo* was being paved in which the expiatory Sacrifice of the Cross would be minimized, camouflaged by greater emphasis on other considerations.

When, in 1969, Cardinals Ottaviani and Bacci produced their *Short Critical Study of the New Order of Mass* (the so-called “Ottaviani Intervention”), they included a criticism and correction of the identification of the Mass with the “Paschal Mystery”:

“Even the phrase in the [General] Instruction, describing the Mass as a “memorial of the Passion *and* Resurrection”, is inexact...the Mass is the memorial of the unique Sacrifice, redemptive in itself; whereas, the Resurrection is the fruit *which follows* from that Sacrifice”. [emphases in the original]

And they concluded that the *Novus Ordo* “represents both as a whole, and in its details, a striking departure from the Catholic theology of the Mass as it was formulated in Session 22 of the Council of Trent”.

How the “Mass of the Presanctified” was abolished

If, as Orwell wrote in *Politics and the English Language*, obfuscatory language is designed “to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable”, the euphemisms used by the liturgical reformers to kill the “Mass of the Pre-sanctified” reveal their unethical methods.

Pius XII’s Liturgy Commission turned out to be a particularly fertile ground for euphemisms, in other words, verbal sleights-of-hand to cloak the

reforms in opaque language so as to make the consequences sound less devastating. Where the reformers wanted to divest the Church of an ancient and venerable rite, they talked about “simplification” of the liturgy, cutting away “unnecessary duplications” and “medieval accretions”, as a “restoration” to original and purer meanings.

With this in mind, we can see through Fr Antonelli’s verbal camouflage when he explained that Pius XII’s reform would “trim back the medieval extravagances...of the so-called Mass of the Pre-sanctified to the severe and original lines of a great, general Communion service”. [296](#)

This coded language created a sense of complicity among the members of the Commission and their collaborators, but it caused perplexity and alarm among the non-initiated.

A toxic clique

When Mgr Léon Gromier, an eminent authority on the *Ceremonial of Bishops* and an erstwhile Consultor to the Congregation of Rites, stated that the “Mass of the Pre-sanctified” became a “victim of a cabal”, he was immediately laughed to scorn as a conspiracy fantasist, his criticism dismissed as unworthy of serious consideration. He was publicly derided and his reputation ruined.

Mgr Gromier delivered his criticism of the reform in a 1960 lecture in Paris, after which he was mercilessly mocked and vilified. He was subjected to a blistering attack full of personal abuse by Fr Louis Bouyer who portrayed him, among other things, as a “drooling” and “doddery old Canon” [297](#) obsessed with ancient rubrics.

Mgr Gromier lived the rest of his life under a cloud of ostracism by the Vatican, but he was later proven to be correct.

The Liturgical Commission established by Pius XII in 1948 was staffed by only half a dozen hand-picked reformers who worked in the strictest secrecy with a mandate to establish the groundwork for a reform of the Church’s *entire* liturgy. Their deliberations were printed privately in 1949 by the Congregation of Rites as an internal “memo” and circulated among a select few collaborators of Bugnini’s choosing, thus concealing their plans from the rest of the Church. The “memo” was only made available to the public in 2003 when it was published under the title of *Memoria sulla riforma liturgica*.

It is noteworthy that Fr Antonelli, who would sign the decree introducing the *Novus Ordo* in 1969, also signed the *Memoria*, but acknowledged that it was mainly the work of his colleague in the Congregation of Rites, Fr Joseph Löw. And it is from this *Memoria* – published for general consumption only in 2003 – that we see the “Mass of the Pre-sanctified” high on their agenda, waiting, as it were, on death row for its impending execution.

Pushing the boundaries of ethics

An examination of the role that the *Memoria* played in the Good Friday reform will show that the “Mass of the Pre-sanctified” was given the equivalent of a show trial, condemned and promptly purged from the Church’s liturgy.

Fr Antonelli mentioned in the 1948 *Memoria* a historical detail about the “Mass of the Pre-sanctified” – the part where the priest, without pronouncing any words, places a portion of the pre-consecrated Host into a chalice containing unconsecrated wine – and used it to insinuate a connection with superstition. He stated that this practice was introduced in the early Middle Ages at a time when some people believed that the contents of the chalice became consecrated merely by contact with the Host. In the same breath he added:

“when the Eucharist had been better studied, it was realized that this belief was groundless, but the rite remained”. [298](#)

An all too transparent pretext

Let us read that again to savour its full implications. What he was effectively saying was that one of the oldest rites of the Catholic Church – one, to boot, that was canonized by Pope Pius V – was not worthy of respect and preservation because it was tainted with heresy and superstition. That is surely chutzpah on a grand scale: it was an indictment of the principle *lex orandi lex credendi* on which the Church’s entire liturgy relies. It is not even an intellectually respectable argument, as it is also contrary to common sense, logic and a Catholic *sensus fidei*.

Fortunately, we have the benefit of an objective and, therefore, more reliable study [299](#) of the use of unconsecrated wine in the Pre-sanctified rite which exposes the flaws in Antonelli’s thesis. From this study which was

based on the most thorough and meticulous historical research from primary sources we gather that:

- this usage in the Roman Rite long predated the consecration-by-contact theory, so it could not have arisen from it, as Antonelli alleged;
- the theory itself was the brainchild of a narrow circle of liturgists and speculative theologians;
- it was by far outweighed by official, orthodox teaching and practice which guided the belief of the faithful;
- it was never a serious enough problem to make waves in the Church;
- the controversy blew itself out so many centuries ago that the information provided by Antonelli is no longer germane to the topic of Good Friday.

So why raise the issue in 1948?

All of these points show that Antonelli was merely using the power of suggestion to compensate for his lack of solid evidence. We can conclude that his remarks were based on innuendo to cast aspersions, doubt and misgivings about the authenticity of the Presanctified rite and lead readers to the conclusion that it was superstitious. This was done by a skilful choice of words which implicitly *suggest* but do not *assert* that conclusion.

Nevertheless, a statement does not need to make a direct attack in order to smear a reputation – a defamatory implication or innuendo can be even more dangerous because the underlying message slips disarmingly into the subconscious mind. The important issue is the impression that the statement is likely to make on those reading it.

As a copy of the *Memoria* was presented to Pius XII in 1949, [300](#) one wonders if he, too, as well as the talking heads of the Liturgical Movement, was swayed by its propaganda which was made to sound credible by specious reasoning. Tragically for the Church, it was this false and malicious innuendo instigated by Antonelli which entered the liturgical reform movement and led to the demise of the “Mass of the Presanctified”.

It is obvious that the fate of the “Mass of the Presanctified” was sealed when Pius XII appointed his Commission for the General Reform of the Liturgy in 1948 and left it in the hands of the master of the dark arts himself, Fr Annibale Bugnini. It was as counterproductive as inviting a group of deserters or draft dodgers to rewrite the rules of discipline and

loyalty in the Armed Forces. No other outcome could have been expected from a Commission that gave precedence over Tradition to a set of reforms which were merely an expression of ideological views prevalent in the Liturgical Movement.

In 1950, with Pius XII's permission, Bugnini chose three "experts", Fr Josef Jungmann SJ, Dom Bernard Capelle OSB and Mgr Mario Righetti to guide the work of the Commission. As household names in the Liturgical Movement, they would later become members of the various Commissions which devised and implemented the New Mass. [301](#)

Thinking with Bugnini

The idea of co-opting the support of those whom Bugnini considered a "safe pair of hands", while excluding anyone (e.g. Mgr Gromier) who respected the integrity of the Church's *lex orandi*, can be considered a blatant abuse of ecclesiastical power. This in itself shows that the reforms were driven by an oligarchy of men who had made themselves the centre and judge of the Church's Tradition and who had no scruples about depriving the faithful of their spiritual heritage. It also disproves the claim that applauding these reforms is equivalent to "thinking with the Church".

In fact, the precise opposite is true: the Church has always in principle rejected the idea of a general reform of the liturgy conceived out of "pastoral expediency" based on the subjective perceptions of contemporary man.

Here we are concerned with one of Bugnini's protégés, Dom Bernard Capelle, Abbot of Mont-César and Professor at the University of Louvain, for as one of Bugnini's inner circle, Capelle was in a position of unrivalled influence at the very heart of the official Liturgical Movement. We will see how, through his reputation as a liturgical scholar, whatever he said about the "Mass of the Pre-sanctified" would be accepted without question by the reformers and used as a lever to topple the ancient edifice.

Where better to raise the profile of this particular reform than at the International Congress on the Liturgy held at Lugano in 1953? It was there that Dom Capelle gave a talk in which he pushed for the abolition of the "Mass of the Pre-sanctified".

Present at the Congress were 2 Cardinals (Ottaviani of the Holy Office and Frings of Cologne), some 15 bishops, several members of the Congregation

of Rites, many priests who were key activists for liturgical change, and the ubiquitous Fr Bugnini himself. [302](#)

No one else at the Congress, apart from the “in-crowd” around Bugnini, is likely to have known that Capelle was speaking on behalf of the Commission – he and the other consultants were sworn to secrecy in that connection. [303](#)

Dom Capelle’s objections

He began by denigrating the traditional liturgy, accusing it of having become “weakened” and “denatured” over the centuries, and said it needed to be restored to its original purity before being adapted to the mentality of modern man. [304](#)

Then he brought up Antonelli’s arcane and irrelevant theory of consecration-by-contact. But his main objection to the Pre-sanctified rite was its use of certain prayers, gestures and ceremonies from the Mass: these included some Offertory prayers, the Elevation of the Host, and the use of incense with its accompanying prayers as in a solemn liturgy. His words take on heightened significance when we consider that these features of the Mass were later specifically singled out for removal from the liturgy. [305](#)

Capelle spoke as if with a sense of acute embarrassment, even shame, about these traditions of Catholic worship. He described them as “intolerable”, alleging that they gave “a false impression” that the Pre-sanctified rite was a real Mass. [306](#) This conveys the subliminal message that it should be abolished. No wonder that the rite has ever since been regarded with suspicion and even disdain.

In its place, Capelle recommended a service of Communion for all which, as we have seen, was Antonelli’s original idea.

Rome fiddles while Tradition burns

At this point, alarm bells should have been ringing throughout the Vatican. For such a proposal, when made into liturgical law two years later, would make it illicit to perform this distinctly Catholic rite which expressed the essential link between the Last Supper and Calvary. And furthermore, as history has shown, it would not be long before traditional Catholics would find *themselves* outlawed as well.

But Rome had no intention of sending in the cavalry to rescue the “Mass of the Pre-sanctified” from the jaws of defeat. As Fr Antonelli recorded, not only was there a consensus among the liturgists for its abolition, but more importantly, the verdict of both the Papal Commission and the Congregation of Rites was overwhelmingly negative:

He stated that “Everyone [on the Commission] applauded the suppression of the so-called Mass of the Presanctified” and that “all the liturgists” agreed that it should be “eliminated”. [307](#)

Although Cardinal Micara, President of the Commission and Pro-Prefect of the Congregation of Rites, was absent from the Congress, he sent a message of support, urging a reform of the Good Friday Liturgy. [308](#) Fr Löw, Vice-Relator of the Congregation and a member of the Commission, was also absent, but had previously expressed disapproval of those elements of the Pre-sanctified rite that were imported from the Mass. [309](#)

But “the unkindest cut of all” came from Pius XII himself who did not intervene to save the “Mass of the Pre-sanctified”, and allowed it to be excised from the Roman Rite. In fact, he had sent a personally signed message to the Congress, dated 9 September 1953, giving his heartfelt encouragement to the deliberations and bestowing his blessing on “each and every participant”. [310](#) And there was a letter from Mgr Montini urging “active participation” for the faithful. [311](#)

How many Catholics today, including traditionalists, know what the “Mass of the Presanctified” was? How could they, considering that it was abolished long before most of them were born? Some confuse its identity with the Good Friday Communion of the 1962 Missal. In other words, they do not know that there is anything to know about it – surely a very successful *damnatio memoriae*. Q.E.D.

15. EASTER VIGIL 1956: A PROCRUSTEAN BED

The hermeneutic of rupture

Continuity with Tradition was exactly what Pius XII’s Commission did not want, as was made abundantly clear in the 1951 Decree [312](#) introducing an

C experimental Easter Vigil service and also in the 1955 Decree [313](#) making it (and the whole of the Holy Week reforms) obligatory for the Roman rite. Both of these Decrees, as we shall see below, contain unjustified criticisms of the traditional rites; they are also accompanied by Instructions for new rites in which the emphasis was placed on the “active participation” of the laity.

In 1953, one of the Commission’s members, Fr Josef Löw, referred to the Easter Vigil as “the great, liturgical experiment that he [Pius XII] ordered to be made”. He asked why it must be celebrated, and gave the answer that it was not because it was the custom, but out of a sense of “pastoral responsibility”. [314](#)

Here we can discern the dim outline of that hermeneutic of discontinuity with Tradition which was being planned, whereby the very forms used from generation to generation were judged to be dispensable.

In order to cover up the enormity of the breach which the Commission was about to make in the millennial tradition of the Easter Vigil, Fr Löw resorted to another rationale:

“Anything new is resented by the creature of habit called man. It may be due to sloth of spirit, or often just a love of ease. As a matter of fact, there is no question in this case of any “innovation” but, more exactly, only of a *restoration* of the ancient, original state of things”. [emphasis in the original] [315](#)

By 1955, however, with the Decree *Maxima Redemptionis* the shape of this most ancient of Vigils (which St Augustine called the “Mother of all Vigils”) was reformulated and some texts were massively curtailed. And new arrangements were invented for the priest to face the people, involving “dialogue” with them in the vernacular. In spite of Fr Löw’s denial, the Easter Vigil was nothing short of a rather spectacular innovation.

False Dawn of the Easter Vigil Reform

Under pressure from the French and German bishops, Pius XII made a new rule that the Church should no longer hold the Easter Vigil in daylight hours, as had been the case since the 7th or 8th centuries, but should revert to the practice of the first Christians who held it after dark. No convincing reason was given by the Congregation of Rites as to why the night time should be deemed the “proper hour” for the Vigil service.

In fact, there is no “proper” hour for a liturgical vigil. The mystery of the Church’s liturgy is, in its essence, not bound by the clock. In liturgical terms, a vigil refers to the eve of a feast day, and can be celebrated with propriety at any time of the day. However, *Maxima Redemptionis* arbitrarily insisted that the ceremonies “may not begin before twilight, or certainly not before sunset”. But the timing of the Easter Vigil had never been set by astronomical calculation, as if everything depended on how many degrees the sun is above or below the horizon.

Nevertheless, Fr Pius Parsch, supported by the Austrian Bishops’ Liturgical Commission, boasted that they were among those who had prevailed on Pius XII to change the Vigil to night time. Posing as the heroic defender of enlightened reform, and raising his standard against the “unliturgical spirit and mentality of the last centuries” which held the Easter Vigil in the morning, he accused the Church of being in error:

“It is a restoration that is in part due to our efforts. For in its various editions *Das Jahr des Heiles* [316](#) has stood at the door of the Father of Christendom like the importunate friend in the Gospel story until an answer was finally given. Even the last edition expressed our wish: ‘It is one of the great objectives of the Liturgical Movement to restore to the Catholic world the Easter Vigil service, the “Mother of all Vigils”, as St Augustine called it’. The unliturgical spirit and mentality of the last centuries has deprived us of the holiest of all nights; the liturgical spirit of our day will correct this error”. [317](#)

With the change of timing for the Easter Vigil to conform to early Christian practices, it seems as if the Church was ordered to return to the catacombs. It is perplexing that the same Pope who had condemned such a retrograde step in the strongest terms as “antiquarianism” only four years earlier, could have countenanced this reversal of his own teaching:

“The liturgy of the early ages is most certainly worthy of all veneration. But ancient usage must not be esteemed more suitable and proper, either in its own right or in its significance for later times and new situations, on the simple ground that it carries the savour and aroma of antiquity. The more recent liturgical rites likewise deserve reverence and respect. They, too, owe their inspiration to the Holy Spirit, who assists the Church in every age even to the consummation of the world. They are equally the resources used

by the majestic Spouse of Jesus Christ to promote and procure the sanctity of man". (*Mediator Dei* 1947 § 61)

But the point about his 1955 Decree, *Maxima Redemptionis*, was that it *did* state that the early Christian Easter Vigil was "more suitable and proper" than what had developed over the intervening centuries; and it *did* reject the principle that "the more recent liturgical rites likewise deserve reverence and respect".

There is no mistaking the language used in the Decree to denigrate the liturgical tradition as it had developed up to the 1950s. *Maxima Redemptionis* carried a note of reprobation of what had been approved and maintained as Catholic practice for centuries, with the scarcely veiled implication that the Church for most of its history had conducted its worship on the wrong lines. In it, the accusation was made that the Easter Vigil had *lost* its original clarity and the meaning of its words and symbols when it was "torn" from its "proper" nocturnal setting, and was no longer in line with the Gospel accounts. According to the reformers, it had even become "harmful" to the symbolic meaning of the Vigil. ³¹⁸ Anyone would think they were referring to a monstrous iniquity that must be removed from the Church.

In other words, the Holy See (echoing the reformers) was claiming that the public prayers of the Church celebrated continually for many centuries, sanctified by long usage and codified by the Council of Trent, were theologically defective and liturgically "improper". Is it conceivable that the traditional manner of celebrating the Easter Vigil in the daytime was a disastrous mistake and that the Church had to wait 14 centuries for Bugnini and his henchmen to put the matter right?

Of course not, and it remains for us to examine in detail the Easter Vigil changes which were published in the 1951 and 1955 Decrees.

Although Holy Saturday is the last day of the Sacred *Triduum*, it was the first target of the reformers' aim to change the entire Holy Week liturgy. 1951 marks the occasion of the first experimental changes to the Easter Vigil service. Initially, they pretended that it was only a question of changing the time of the ceremony from morning to night. ³¹⁹ But we now know for certain that what was being planned by Bugnini and the Liturgical Commission in 1948 was far more disruptive of Tradition and takes us onto quite a different plane.

The 1948 Papal Commission was primed by key members of the Liturgical Movement to reform the Easter Vigil in response to demands by the reformist German bishops, among whom the last vestiges of liturgical order, discipline and loyalty to Rome had broken down. As we have seen, they had set up an autonomous Episcopal Conference for liturgical matters in 1940, independently of Rome, the aim of which was to wrest control of the liturgy from the Holy See. While promoting the dissident activities of *avant-garde* liturgists in their own dioceses, the German bishops were strongly supported by their compatriot and front man in the Vatican, Fr Augustin Bea, who was a permanent member of Pius XII's Commission on the Liturgy.

The formation of a “protection monopoly” over the liturgy

The history of the Liturgical Movement shows that, since 1940, the Pope was under siege by the German and French reformist movements who were rallying their combined forces to wrest control of the liturgy from Rome. On 2 November 1950, the bishops of Germany and Austria, in conjunction with France, formally petitioned Pope Pius XII to move the Easter Vigil to the night time. This request had been proposed by Fr Romano Guardini at the First German National Liturgical Congress, organized by the Liturgical Institute of Trier in Frankfurt in June of that year.

As we have already noted, there was no real justification for this change. This point is worth emphasizing, for it indicates that said bishops were offering a service to fix a problem that did not exist. Furthermore, they were determined to eliminate any competition from traditionalists which would undermine their monopoly over the direction of liturgical reform.

This is evident from a letter, published as *Ein Wort zur liturgischen Frage* (A Word on the Liturgical Question), which Guardini wrote in 1940 to Bishop Stohr of Mainz, Head of the Liturgical Commission appointed by the German Episcopal Conference. In it, he demanded that the German bishops should protect the members of the Liturgical Movement from attacks coming from conservative clergy against their convictions and work.

Guardini, however, could hardly be described as a “courageous” reformer. As long as he was hiding behind the skirts of the German bishops, his agenda can be seen as both craven and partisan. Incidentally, so great was

Guardini's popularity among the *bien-pensants* of the Liturgical Establishment that even Pius XII protected him and made him a Prelate of the Papal Household in 1952.

An exercise in sabre-rattling

An interesting feature of this organized campaign was its ability to secure the patronage of Pius XII who, as we have seen, was willing to conciliate their demands. It is not surprising that in 1950 the German bishops, Mafia-style, made the Pope "an offer he couldn't refuse": protect the desires of the Liturgical Movement or face an out-and-out mutiny of the combined French and German Episcopates.

To this Franco-German initiative we may add the implicit threat made by *Padrino* Antonelli who wrote in the Introduction to the *Memoria* for the Pope's attention:

"[I]t is recognized **by all** that there exists today **throughout the whole Catholic world**, and especially in the ranks of the clergy, the desire, or rather **the conviction, of the necessity for a reform of the liturgy**".
[emphases added]

The idea that everyone in the Church was clamouring for a reform of the liturgy was, of course, a complete fabrication. There was not the slightest evidence of a world-wide consensus of priests supposedly massing on the horizon and calling for revolutionary changes in the liturgy. But liturgical revolution was precisely what the Commission had the potential to bring about. It could and did put pressure on Pius XII to abolish or alter liturgical legislation or pass innovatory laws at a stroke of a pen.

A Procrustean Reform

Whereas the other ceremonies of Holy Week were only partially affected by cuts and innovations, the Easter Vigil, as we shall see, was totally dismembered, its remaining parts arbitrarily rearranged and altered to change its symbolic meaning from a Christ-centred to a man-centred celebration.

To illustrate the point by way of analogy, let us recall the story from Greek mythology about Procrustes, a rogue innkeeper and robber from Attica who had a bed that he claimed would fit anyone, no matter how tall or short they were. And he was right – he forced his guests to fit the size of the bed by

cutting off their legs or stretching their bodies into the required shape, before robbing them of their valuables.

The analogy can be aptly applied to the new Easter Vigil which Pius XII presented to the Church as a *fait accompli* in 1956 when it became obvious that the entire rite had been hacked and racked on a Procrustean bed of reform, with many of its precious assets stolen. The reformers chose “active participation” as the bed on which the traditional rite was to be measured, and decided that whatever parts of it did not conform to their ideals should be hacked off or skewed beyond recognition.

The Easter Vigil put in the dock

Now we will examine the 1948 *Memoria* to see what in that text was used to justify the creation of a new rite. Chapter 3 reveals the fundamental bias of the Commission against the traditional Easter Vigil, how it was put on trial and accused under false pretences of being unfit for purpose.

Fr Antonelli mentioned some “problems” with the traditional Easter Vigil as a whole which, he considered, stood in need of reform. To begin with, he considered the centuries-old tradition of holding the Vigil in the morning as an aberration from the practice of the early Christians who held it at night, and recommended a return to antiquity.

There were also, in his opinion, too many Old Testament readings (“*profezie*”) and not enough emphasis on Baptism or scope for “active participation” by the laity. So the remedy was to be sought in a swingeing reduction of the number of Scriptural passages – these were reduced from 12 to 4 – increased levels of activity by the laity and the introduction of a complete liturgical novelty, the renewal of Baptismal Promises by the congregation. [320](#)

Negative stereotypes

But all these points, far from constituting evidence for a reform, simply reflected the views which were characteristic of the leaders of the Liturgical Movement. As we have seen, these views had already been doing the rounds in the German-speaking lands in the 1930s and 40s when some progressivists such as Frs Pius Parsch, Romano Guardini and Hans Reinhold were conducting their own experiments with the Easter Vigil in defiance of Canon Law.

There is reason to believe that what Fr Antonelli wrote in the *Memoria* about the presumed need to reform the Easter Vigil was merely the expression of his own personal opinions coupled with those of other activists for liturgical reform. The fine details of this reform were left to be hammered out by a sub-commission – in secret – and later approved by Pius XII.

A “courageous innovation”

One of the reforms that Antonelli had in mind – which is actually what transpired – was the insertion of a new rite into the Easter Vigil, which would allow the congregation to renew their Baptismal Promises in dialogue with the priest. He stated in the *Memoria*:

“It is a question of finding courageous men with a good knowledge of the ancient liturgy, capable of creating today a rite, a ceremony, in the sense of the primitive liturgy, and in the spirit of modern life. That is one of the points that many people hope for from this long desired liturgical reform”. [321](#)

Before proceeding further, we must note that the “many people” were the few key reformers, mainly from Germany and France, supported by a band of zealous flag-wavers, and that there was certainly no popular demand among the clergy or laity for a reform of the Easter Vigil.

Earlier in the *Memoria* he stated that “the Church knows how to make courageous innovations when the supreme good of Christian life demands it”. [322](#)

In fact, Fr Antonelli once boasted of his self-styled “courage” to Pius XII during an audience when he presented his *Memoria* to the Pope. In his diary, dated 22 July 1949, he said that the Pope, having read some of the *Memoria*, described the proposals for reform as “*valientes*” (courageous). And Antonelli replied that his “courage” was based on his confidence that he could count on the Pope’s support. [323](#) As it turned out, his confidence was rewarded by Pius XII in the Holy Week reform.

Thus, he introduced two concepts which were foreign to the Church’s discipline – that innovation was a praiseworthy and integral part of liturgical development, and that new rites which had no precedent in liturgical history can be invented if deemed by “courageous men” – including himself – to be good for the people. From that moment, the

official organs of the Holy See embarked on a course of liturgical adventurism that would lead eventually to the most incongruous innovation of all – Pope Paul’s New Mass.

It is in the light of the *Memoria*, then, that we can interpret the thinking behind Article 23 of the Constitution on the Liturgy which says that “there must be no innovations unless the good of the Church genuinely and certainly requires them”, and that “any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing”.

But it was only in the estimation of the reformers that their innovations were considered “good”. And the “new forms” envisaged by them came not from “forms already existing” *in* Tradition but from those conceived and enacted by the reformers *outside* Tradition which had no right to existence in the first place. Unfortunately, Pius XII incorporated some of these into the Church’s official liturgy.

An Orwellian moment

Suddenly the destroyers of Tradition who had been ignoring or deliberately flouting the rubrics and rebelling against authority were transformed into heroes of the Church. Received forms of worship which had been the mainstay of the spiritual life of the faithful for centuries and were instrumental in the formation of countless saints were deemed useless and cast aside by the “courageous” actions of the reformers. But there is plenty of evidence that anyone truly courageous enough to put his head above the parapet and oppose these reforms was immediately shot down in flames and subjected to a campaign of bullying, intimidation and personal abuse by members of the Liturgical Movement.

It will become clear that Antonelli and his companions were acting not from the moral virtue of courage, that is, to save the traditional Vigil and prevent it from coming to harm, but rather from their own narrow, one-sided and self-serving desire to destroy it.

Armed with this knowledge, we can easily read between the lines of their request to Pius XII concerning the Easter Vigil. It would not be simply a question of changing its timing, but incorporating all the revolutionary changes that Fr Bea and the other members of the Papal Commission had been planning, as recorded in their 1948 *Memoria*.

Taking liberties with Tradition

As we work our way through the 1951-1956 Easter Vigil reform, we should note that the principle of fidelity to Tradition was starting to be replaced by the principle of destruction and innovation. The way was thus opened for progressive, tendentious and prejudiced views fresh from the committee room to become the official policy of the Holy See and be set in juridical stone.

It would also be useful to keep in mind that only 50 years before Pius XII's Commission applied the new revolutionary principles to the Easter Vigil reform, the Catholic bishops of Westminster had written:

“in adhering rigidly to the rite handed down to us we can always feel secure: whereas, if we omit or change anything, we may perhaps be abandoning just that element which is essential.

...to subtract prayers and ceremonies in previous use, and even to remodel the existing rites in a most drastic manner, is a proposition for which we know of no historical foundation, and which appears to us absolutely incredible”. [324](#)

But the incredible *did* happen, first in 1951 with the experimental Easter Vigil, then with the publication of Pius XII's new *Ordo* of 1956 containing the full-blown reforms.

The blessing of the new fire was compromised

The reformed Easter Vigil begins, as in the ancient rite, with the lighting of the Paschal fire; so far, so traditional. But any concordance between the two ceremonies ends there. What happens next is the stuff of all revolutions. The reformed rite immediately starts, in true Procrustean fashion, on its path of racking, hammering and amputation of living, viable elements of tradition to make them fit new ways of thinking.

The first step in this process occurred when the reformers cut out two of the three prayers for the blessing of the new fire. Both of the eliminated prayers were rooted in Scripture and asked God to enlighten the faithful on the path of salvation as He had enlightened Moses coming out of Egypt, and to protect them from the “fiery darts of the enemy” i.e. the Evil One. (Ephesians 6:16)

It is now well established that when the *Novus Ordo* was created, prayers were removed which had expressed the Church's teaching on concupiscence (the “fiery darts”) and the necessary spiritual warfare a

Christian must engage in against the assaults of the Devil. But the basic and indisputable fact, unknown to most, is that the Liturgical Commission started this process with the 1956 reform of the Easter Vigil by expunging this prayer from the blessing of the new fire.

With it they also expunged a vital element of Catholic doctrine expressed in the liturgy: that the items blessed by the Church's prayers are imbued with the power of God to protect the faithful from the influence of the Devil.

This is only one example among many to illustrate how the ancient traditions possess valuable points of wisdom whose loss impoverishes the spiritual life of Catholics. If the aim of the reform was to "make the liturgy become the source of an authentically Christian life", as its leaders have constantly proclaimed, this cannot be achieved by destroying traditions and squandering inherited resources. For, it is axiomatic that the *lex orandi* shapes the *lex credendi* which in turn influences how we live. When these prayers were removed from the liturgy, the faithful were deprived of the spiritual aid which the Church had lavished on them for centuries.

Also missing from 1956 prayer of blessing the fire is the former reference to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, an omission whose significance will become clearer later in the rite.

Why minimalized blessings?

A parallel can be drawn with the excision of all but one of the prayers for the blessing of palms in the 1956 Palm Sunday reform.

The question arises as to why the reformers dismantled the elaborate structure of blessings, whether in the Palm Sunday or the Easter Vigil ceremonies, that the Church had built up to emphasize the very essence of Holy Week as a celebration of Christ's work of redemption from which all blessings draw their source.

The full significance of these truncated blessings only emerged after Vatican II. They were the prelude to the phasing out of the blessing of objects ³²⁵ in the post-Conciliar period when, generally speaking, priests no longer believed that they possessed, through the Sacrament of Ordination, the power to bless material things, or that there is any difference between the sacred and the profane.

Bugnini's not too invisible hand

All the evidence indicates that this was the outcome desired by the members of the Papal Commission from the outset.

- Chapter 3 of their 1948 *Memoria* mentions their plans for the radical reform of the *Rituale Romanum*;
- many blessings of sacramentals were eliminated in the 1956 Holy Week rites;
- the Liturgy Constitution introduced a theological shift in the liturgical ministry of blessings by rooting it in the laity rather than the ordained priesthood;
- the 1964 Consilium (of which Bugnini was Secretary) stated that “the area in which the most radical revision and new adaptation will be needed is the sacramentals”. [326](#)

That is exactly what the *Memoria* had set out to achieve in 1948. And the 1956 reform was only one stop along the road to the *terminus ad quem* (the final goal).

Even if it can be argued that these changes were small compared to what came later, nevertheless a succession of relatively minor alterations made within the complex network of the traditional liturgy tends to unravel the whole structure and destroy the meaning of the entire ritual. It was in this manner of piecemeal reform that the Liturgical Commission robbed the official Holy Week liturgy of much of its significance.

16. EASTER VIGIL RE-ORCHESTRATED

When it comes to appreciating the traditional Holy Saturday rite, we could think of it as a grand orchestra, transposed onto the spiritual plane, in which the prayers, hymns and ceremonies, formulated centuries ago by saints and consecrated souls, are performed in a manner worthy of their composers' intentions. Clearly, any appreciation of so ancient a rite cannot be based on abstract academic theories or the private hunches and personal preferences of a group of liturgical "experts".

One cannot, like the modernizing reformers, overlook the accumulated wisdom, piety and sanctifying properties of the old rite with its many centuries of hallowed use. Nor can one fail to take into account that, just as in an orchestra, all its constituent parts had a definite and logical relationship not only to every other part but also to the main structure. So, disturbing even one element is bound to disturb the internal balance and harmony of the whole.

We must also consider the wider impact of such changes on the Church itself which, before the 1956 reforms, had always appeared as a cohesive organization ensuring an exact correspondence between the *lex orandi* and *lex credendi*. No Pope before Pius XII had ever removed parts of the liturgy pertaining to Catholic Faith and Morals, as he allowed his Commission to do, so that the disbeliever would not feel "uncomfortable" – as if truth and virtue were understood to be relative to time, place or culture.

As we shall see in more detail, the reformers under Bugnini's general management radically re-orchestrated the Easter Vigil in 1956. However, the only similarity between Bugnini and a conductor was that both could make things happen with the wave of a hand. Judging by the results he produced, which are set out below, we will be justified in concluding that he and his Commission, to put it charitably, must not have had an ear for music. Soon, the orchestra would be playing discordant notes out of harmony with Catholic Tradition, under the baton of a leader who was, to all intents and purposes, tone deaf.

The blessing of the five grains of incense downgraded

The centennial custom in the Roman Rite was to bless five grains of incense – to be later implanted into the Paschal Candle – with the ancient prayer *Veniat quaesumus* and the antiphon *Asperges me, Domine* said by the priest. The Church had given this ceremony greater prominence in the Middle Ages when the art of allegorical exegesis was at its height. As the five grains of incense represent symbolically the five wounds of Christ, they were considered worthy of a solemn blessing before being inserted into the Paschal Candle whose pure, white wax was also a symbol of Christ's virginal Body.

However, the 1948 Commission whipped up a spurious controversy over this issue, charging that during all those centuries the Church was wrong to use the prayer *Veniat* for that purpose because in the early Church it was used to bless the Candle. [327](#)

Some detractors of medieval symbolism even suggested that the use of the *Veniat* in the pre-1956 rite originated from a linguistic muddle due to a misinterpretation of the Latin word *incensum*. This theory, implying that the Church Fathers were not proficient in Latin, strains credibility, and can be easily debunked. [328](#)

What actually happened to the solemn blessing of the five grains of incense at the Easter Vigil as a result of this pseudo-controversy constitutes another sad chapter in the 1956 reform. The accompanying prayer *Veniat* was not axed. But, as we shall see, the reformers used that other Procrustean operation of stretching and skewing to make it fit a different context. This left the incense grains without any ceremonial prayer for their blessing, also making the *Asperges* antiphon redundant.

Furthermore, according to the 1962 rubrics, even the blessing itself could be dispensed with in the rite. The priest could bypass this part of the rite if the incense grains had already been blessed before the Vigil, i.e. he blesses them only "*si non sunt benedicta*" (if they are not blessed) and in silence ("*nihil dicens*"). This gives a further opportunity to reduce the solemnity of what St Augustine called the "Vigil of all Vigils".

Liturgical "thimble-rig"

Bugnini, it seems, was a past master at the old game of thimble-rig ³²⁹ in which the rapid sleight-of-hand deceives the eye. By means of abstraction, substitution and transposition, he and his colleagues on the Commission managed to radically reconstruct the entire Easter Vigil while making it difficult to keep one's eye, as it were, on the ball.

First, Bugnini uprooted the *Veniat* prayer from its connection with the incense. By a process of shell-shuffling, his confederates on the Commission whisked it away to be redeployed for the blessing of the Paschal Candle, having first changed its wording – the word *cereum* (candle) was added – to fit its newfound purpose. If we think this move was trivial and inconsequential, unworthy of prolonged attention, we are much deceived by the operator of the scam.

Where's the ball?

As in all shell games, there is more in the move than meets the eye. It raises the question: where does that leave the *Exsultet*, the magnificent hymn which the Church had been using since at least the 7th century as the framework for blessing the Paschal Candle? Its function was recorded in ancient Sacramentaries as the *Benedictio Cerei* (blessing of the Candle), and was faithfully handed on to us over the centuries until the 1956 reform. That, however, was before the “shells” were shuffled again and the *Exsultet* suddenly lost its traditional function; it found itself changed from a rite of blessing and consecration of the Paschal Candle to simply a hymn of praise.

This was hardly an innocent or inconsequential transposition, given the succession of changes that logically ensued and which, therefore, must have been intended. For, if the *Exsultet* has lost its *raison d'être* in the blessing of the Candle, the ceremonial procession leading to that climactic event also loses its theological significance.

An examination of the 1948 *Memoria* will reveal the specious reasoning behind these changes. By this means it will become painfully obvious that when Bugnini and the Commission had finished rearranging the “shells”, some ancient ceremonies were discontinued, having been absorbed and replaced by innovations and that different liturgical forms, and some doctrinal content, had simply disappeared.

As the content of the *Memoria* shows, the Papal Commission operated as a lobby group with the evident intention to bend the ear of Pius XII so as to influence future legislation on the liturgy.

Below, using the internal evidence of the *Memoria* itself, we will see how the Commission set out to achieve its aims. First, it created a fake controversy over the authenticity of the Church's centuries-old *lex orandi*, making it seem that somewhere along the way the Church had made a wrong turning. Then, having cast doubt on the integrity of Tradition, it proceeded to control the terms of the debate as follows.

***Veniat* or *Exsultet*? The pseudo-controversy**

Basically, the dispute – invented by the Commission out of thin air – was about whether the Church had erred in using the *Exsultet* – rather than the *Veniat* – to bless the Paschal Candle. Dom Lambert Beauduin had no hesitation in calling it a “profound error”. [330](#)

Fr Antonelli, on behalf of the Commission, presented the *status quaestionis* thus:

“Everyone knows that in our Missals the hymn *Exsultet* is called the *Benedictio Cerei* [Blessing of the Candle], and the liturgists have posed the question as to whether the Deacon can bless the Candle. But historians of the liturgy know very well that the real prayer of blessing of the Candle is the *Veniat*, which today has come to be used as the blessing of the grains of incense, in spite of the fact that the same text clearly refers to the Candle and its light. The *Exsultet* is the real *Praeconium Paschale* and should be given back its original title, while the prayer *Veniat* should once again become the *Benedictio Cerei*”. [331](#)

We are left to marvel at how many false or tendentious remarks he could fit into one paragraph. Who the historians are is not disclosed; but from Antonelli's account, their opinions have as much credibility as the plotline of Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code* novel insofar as both are rooted in misinformation and constitute a concealed, indirect assault on the integrity of Catholic Tradition. Let us take each of his points in turn.

Fr Antonelli begins by challenging the Church's right to have the blessing of the Candle during the *Exsultet*, and plants a seed of doubt about the deacon's role in performing it. Beauduin (*op. cit.*), for his part, complained that “the deacon never blessed any object, especially before his superiors”. [332](#)

As any competent historian of the liturgy would know, from the early centuries of the Church, it was the deacon's office to light the Paschal

Candle, and that he was also given the privilege of performing its blessing during the *Exsultet*. The priest is, of course, the ordinary minister of blessings. But at the Easter Vigil the deacon was given the exceptional privilege of acting as his deputy to bless the Candle, using the flame from the new fire and the five grains of incense blessed by the priest earlier in the ceremony.

Fr Antonelli did not mention that this tradition was based on an immemorial custom of well over a thousand years, being attested to in the ancient Gallican Sacramentaries e.g. the 7th century *Missale Gothicum*, [333](#) one of the forerunners of the Roman Missal. Nevertheless, the Commission decided to bring it to an end in 1956 without, however, being able to offer a single good reason for the change.

From reduced blessing to no blessing

That was how the blessing of the Candle was peremptorily transferred from the long, elaborate and impressive hymn of the *Exsultet* sung by the deacon in the sanctuary, to the one-paragraph prayer of the *Veniat* spoken by the priest outside the church. Beauduin commented on this low-profile arrangement. He noted with satisfaction that in the 1956 reform, the blessing was carried out “privately”, by which he meant in a less visible manner and without elaborate ceremony. [334](#)

Once again, the reformers displayed a certain squeamishness about blessing material objects which sits ill with Catholic Tradition. Furthermore, this demotion was a transitory stage to the *Novus Ordo* in which the Paschal Candle is not blessed at any stage of the Easter Vigil – the new rite mentions only the “Preparation of the Candle”, not its blessing.

An unnecessary controversy

Was there any need to change the blessing of the Candle from the *Exsultet* to the *Veniat*? Let us examine the Commission’s claim that the *Veniat* was the “real prayer of blessing”, and should have been retained, while the *Exsultet*, which the Church had chosen for that purpose was, by implication, unauthentic.

The historical evidence shows that neither blessing was, in fact, any more or less “real” than the other. Both have an excellent pedigree, of roughly similar antiquity, in the Gelasian and Gallican Sacramentaries respectively.

As the *Exsultet* eventually became more popular and widely used – indeed, it became the most prized of all the jewels of the Easter Vigil – it was both obvious and natural that the Church gave it priority over the other prayer for inclusion in the Roman Missal as the blessing of the Candle.

It is noteworthy that this priority arose not by bureaucratic fiat from on high – as in the 20th century reforms when the *Veniat* was imposed – but from the historical fact that the *Exsultet* proved to have more widespread popular acclaim. In other words, the blessing of the Candle was not legislated by a Commission or other tribunal, but emerged as an implicit preference among the community of the faithful, and that before the expression “organic development” was invented.

Sacrificing truth to power

By 1956, it is evident that unseen interests were exerting enormous control over the future of the liturgy. The text of the *Memoria* was available only to “insiders” and *to no one else*. Under cover of secrecy, the Commission attempted – and failed – to prove that the Church had made a *faux pas*. We can now say that it was not simply unscholarly but dishonest to claim that the *Veniat* was the “real” prayer of blessing of the Candle and that it should supplant the immemorial custom of the *Exsultet*. There is absolutely no evidence to support that claim, much evidence against it, and even more evidence that the liturgical “science” underpinning it was fabricated.

We can conclude, therefore, that the Commission members arrived at their judgement only by leaving out a key element of liturgical history – its “organic development” – and skewed the historical evidence to fit their *a priori* theory. This is a typical example of how the Commission took a counter-position against long-established, universal traditions simply on the basis of their own subjective preferences.

As with the rest of the Easter Vigil, indeed with the entire Holy Week, centuries of hallowed customs were scrutinized by members of the Commission with a view to eradicating them on flimsy or false pretexts. Thus, the *lex orandi*, the very locus of sanctification of the faithful and the principal means of replicating the Faith in successive generations, became a particular target of officiousness and bureaucratic control. The Commission worked to ensure that Tradition would henceforth no longer be master in its own house, but had to cede authority to abstract theories beloved of liturgical “experts” and historians.

The Procession of the Paschal Candle

The decision to transpose the blessing of the Candle from the *Exsultet* to the *Veniat* had another unwarranted effect: it changed the theological significance of the Procession from a carefully choreographed pageant dramatizing the fact of the Resurrection as a historical event, to an unstructured melee in which the Paschal Candle (representing the risen Christ) was outshone by the People's candles.

For many centuries, the process of bringing the fire to the Paschal Candle was part of the complex of features that gave the Easter Vigil its unique and recognizable identity. In the Church's immemorial tradition, this was accomplished by the deacon carrying in procession a triple-branched candlestick representing the Holy Trinity. As the procession of clergy advanced into the church, the three candles were lit successively to honour each Person of the Holy Trinity; at each lighting the deacon sang the three-fold *Lumen Christi* and the choir responded *Deo gratias*, whereupon all genuflected.

The final destination of the Procession was the sanctuary where the unlit Paschal Candle was already in place waiting for the deacon to light it from one of the three candles. This tripartite symbolism was calculated to make a lasting theological impact on the faithful. For those who were waiting inside the unlit church, this was a pinnacle moment, the climax to which the procession was leading. It illustrated in the most visually dramatic way the doctrine that it was the Holy Trinity – represented by the triple-branched candlestick – that effected the Resurrection. It was a statement without words that Christ raised Himself from the dead by His own Divine power.

Elimination of the triple-branched candlestick

The Commission eliminated the ceremony of the triple candle with its Trinitarian symbolism and replaced it with a procession involving “active participation” of the laity, leaving it, as we shall see, with only secondary, if not exactly marginal, connections with the Resurrection. What this amounts to in practical terms is an attempt to censor or silence the liturgical expression of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. It was a pattern which was replicated not only during the rest of the Holy Week reforms but also in the creation of the New Mass.

The most obvious effect of suppressing this symbolism was to give the impression that belief in the actual physical i.e. bodily Resurrection of Christ – the chief of His miracles as proof of His Divinity – is not something that should be taken too literally. This was the position of the mid-20th century progressivists, successors of the early Modernists, who succeeded in spreading doubts about the great supernatural interventions of God in human history. The theological Modernists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries had been working to reinterpret and “demythologize” the Sacred Scriptures by explaining away the miracles and focusing on inner spiritual “experiences” instead of revealed truths. Consequently, their progressive successors in the Liturgical Movement were determined to suppress the supernatural content of the liturgy and make it as man-centred as possible. Their influence in the Liturgical Movement was beginning to make itself felt in the Holy Week reforms of Pius XII.

We are, therefore, justified in raising the question: did those members of the Commission who proposed reforms which accommodated the ideas of the neo-Modernists hold the integral Catholic Faith? To ask the question is to answer it.

Here, however, we are less concerned with the presumed *intentions* of the reformers than with the reforms themselves and their internal logic. Our brief is an objective examination of certain affirmations made by Fr Antonelli in the *Memoria*, and the conclusions to which they logically lead.

Returning to the analogy with an orchestra

Thinking of the traditional Easter Vigil ceremonies as an orchestra playing a piece of classical music composed of different movements can help us to see how much damage was done by the 1956 reforms.

The Procession itself was a masterpiece of artistry in which the lighting of each candlestick worked in counterpoint to the corresponding genuflections to produce a harmonic progression towards the crescendo, the lighting of the Paschal Candle. And the text of the *Exsultet* states that the Candle is lit “to the honour of God” (“*in honorem Dei*”). It was a fitting climax that this should take place at the precise moment during the *Exsultet* when the text mentions the lighting of the Candle.

Purpose of the Procession undermined

But when the reformers re-orchestrated the Procession in 1956, they cut out and added on whatever they pleased.

By suppressing the triple-branched candlestick, they upset the balance and harmony of the “orchestra”. The tripartite candle had acted as a kind of masthead identifying itself as a symbol of the Holy Trinity and displaying the purpose of the Procession, which was to light the Paschal Candle. When it disappeared, the corresponding three-fold *Lumen Christi* and the three genuflections were left without their intended counterpart.

As the relationship between each instrument in an orchestra is one of complementarity, this fundamentally changed the combination of elements in the symphony. The effect was like trying to play Mozart’s Flute and Harp Concerto without, say, the flute. It would be a lopsided creation, a monument to organizational failure, because the sound would be off-balance and not ring true to the composer’s original intention. While it is inconceivable that any conductor would commit such a desecration, it transpired that the Commission actually accomplished something similar in the Easter Vigil with Bugnini at the podium.

A people-centred rite

What the purpose of the reformed Procession was in relation to the Resurrection is unclear. The Paschal Candle was lit, but without ceremony, before the Procession began – a comparatively poor reception for the fact of the Resurrection and a definite anti-climax to the traditional rite – and carried through the church so that everyone, without distinction of clergy or laity, could light their own individual candle from its flame.

The whole process was not only an astonishing innovation in the Roman Rite, but also a considerable distraction from the main point of the Vigil, as it diverted attention away from the centrality of Christ to the people. The Paschal Candle, which was supposed to show the Light of Christ coming into the darkness of the world, was outshone by the constellation of candles in the hands of the laity illuminating the darkness far more effectively.

Yet this was not an oversight by the Commission. The new arrangement was chosen intentionally by the reformers to make the following point. The people, by merely holding a lighted candle, were encouraged to think of *themselves* as the bearers of the Light they had received at Baptism, as if it could never have been lost since then. This was confirmed by Fr Clifford

Howell SJ, one of the foremost proponents of the 1956 reform. With reference to “all the clergy and people” at the Vigil, he stated:

“Their candles now shine with the flame received this night from the Christ-candle; their souls live with the life received from Christ in Baptism”. [335](#)

What this reform shows is that the theologically unfounded optimism about human nature, which later surfaced at Vatican II, had entered the liturgy in the mid-1950s. For all the preceding centuries of its existence, the Church had wisely emphasized the frailty of human nature, its propensity to sin and its constant need for the Light.

Where once there was harmony, now there is discord

The Procession was not the only element of the reformed Easter Vigil that underwent a change of character either through modifications to its form and content or through a novel interpretation of its role. We have seen how the *Exsultet* lost its operative principle as the Blessing of the Candle and was reduced to a mere text, while an entirely new ceremony was invented for the Candle.

Bearing in mind that the omission or rearrangement of even one element in an orchestra, or the addition of an extraneous element, could upset the balance and harmony of the ensemble, we can conceptualize the damage done to the traditional Vigil by the omission of two-thirds of the Scriptural readings: of the original 12 Prophecies, only 4 remained in 1956.

In the *Memoria*, Fr Antonelli explained the “reasoning” behind this reduction:

- In the time of St Gregory the Great, there were only 4 Prophecies;
- there is nothing special about the number 12; therefore, no “absolute need” (*necessità assoluta*) to stick to it;
- 12 readings are a “real burden” (*vero onere*) on everyone concerned;
- in our day, it is inappropriate to subject the laity to the readings in Latin (*la lettura in latino*).

It is not entirely true that the Gregorian Sacramentary had only 4 Prophecies. Unknown to the Commission, it also had a Supplement containing 12 Old Testament readings in widespread use in the Carolingian era. [336](#)

Besides, there is no convincing reason why the Commission should single out the Gregorian system as the model for the 1956 Easter Vigil. At that relatively early period in its history, the Roman Rite was still in its embryonic stage, and was in the process of absorbing elements from 7th century Gallican and other sources which had many more readings. [337](#) The Church finally settled for 12 – the same number as in the 5th century Easter Vigil in Jerusalem [338](#) – and they remained in this form over the centuries until 1956. Evidently, the Commission saw no reason to respect this immemorial tradition.

We must note a curious irony here. The Commission had set itself the task of returning the liturgy to its primitive foundations in the first centuries of the Church and cutting out whatever it considered to be later “accretions”. Yet it rejected the number of scriptural readings which had characterized the earliest known Easter Vigil, i.e. 12, for a small fraction found at an interim stage of development of the Roman Rite.

This reform is all the more reprehensible because, once the norm of 12 had become established, the Sacred Congregation of Rites had repeatedly forbidden any diminution in the number of readings, adding that “all must be sung entire”. [339](#)

A concession to anthropocentrism

The Easter Vigil reform, which started in 1951 on an experimental basis, is the earliest evidence we have that the reformed Vigil was primarily geared towards the comfort and convenience of the assembly. By characterizing the 12 Prophecies as too much of a “burden” – it might as well have said “too long and boring” – for all concerned, the Commission presented the traditional liturgy as a form of oppression from which the faithful needed to be liberated.

According to this perverse view, the faithful were incapable of deriving spiritual nourishment from the traditional liturgy, and it must, therefore, be tailored to suit their perceived needs. Such a conclusion about the faithful is both condescending and shallow. It ignores the true method of participation

whereby they engaged in understanding and praying the liturgy with hearts and minds without necessarily knowing the meaning of all the Latin words.

St Thomas Aquinas explained: “Although some may not understand what is being sung, they understand why it is being sung, that is, for the praise of God, and this is enough, even if the faithful do not strictly speaking sing in order to rouse their devotion”. [340](#)

For the most part, they were simply drawn to the message of the texts sung by the choir in Gregorian Chant. In other words, a lively Faith was paramount and an instinct for God; little else was needed.

Before these unnecessary reforms, the whole of the Church’s liturgy, most especially in Holy Week, was imbued with the spirit of sacrifice. Yet of this indispensable requirement the Commission made not a mention. Instead, turning all previous wisdom on its head, it allowed the liturgy, for the first time in the Church’s history, to be imbued with the spirit of the world, catering to the baser human instincts for a less “burdensome” form of worship.

A significant omission

Although the reformed rite retained the reading from Isaiah Chapter 4, there was still something missing: its first verse was cut out in 1956. What was so objectionable about it that modern ears had to be shielded from its prophecy? The missing verse highlighted the importance of marriage as an essentially patriarchal society established by God for the procreation of children.

It is not without significance that this procreative purpose was not clearly affirmed at Vatican II as the primary end of marriage, but downgraded and conflated with other ends, contrary to both the Natural Law and the biblical teaching. But the first overtures to the radical feminist agenda had already been made in 1956 with the omission of Isaiah 4:1 from the traditional liturgy.

The importance of the 12 Prophecies

For the ordinary Catholic, questioning why there were 12 Prophecies was superfluous. It was enough to recognize, without the need to analyse why there was that number, that it was the immemorial tradition of the Church.

The lengthy readings were chosen to emphasize that the Redemption had been predicted by the Patriarchs and Prophets throughout the Old

Testament. In order to make the point most cogently, the readings were skilfully crafted into 3 distinct groups of 4 nocturns, each with its own theme, giving the full history of our Redemption from the Creation to the Resurrection.

But, in the reform, most of the accounts relating to the Resurrection were suppressed e.g. Noah and the Ark (as in the Palm Sunday blessings), Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, Ezechiel's vision of the valley of the dry bones, Jonah in the whale, the three young men in the fiery furnace. Their relevance to the Church is that they were all figures of the death and Resurrection of Christ.

Significantly, the Instruction accompanying the Decree *Maxima Redemptionis* (1955) lacks any mention of this connection. In its commentary on the Old Testament readings, it simply states that in them "the great deeds accomplished by God in the Old Covenant are commemorated, pale images of the marvels of the New Testament". Thus, any specific reference to the Resurrection as a fact of history predicted in the Old Testament is avoided.

We are left wondering what the real reason was for the drastic reduction in the Easter Vigil readings. In their attempt to offer the faithful an "easy-riding" liturgy, the progressive reformers detached *the* essential element of the *lex credendi* from the *lex orandi* which underpins it. All they succeeded in doing, therefore, was to deprive the whole Church in 1956 – and the modern-day users of the 1962 Missal – of the full panoply of Prophecies which pointed to the Resurrection of Christ.

17. EASTER VIGIL: FROM RATIONAL ORDER TO CHAOTIC ABANDON

The blessing of the font

In the pre-1956 liturgy, the blessing of the baptismal water took place in the baptistery, the part of the church (or even a separate building) where the font was traditionally located. The clergy would process from the sanctuary to bless both the font and the water it contained, while the choir chanted the relevant section of Psalm 41, *Sicut cervus*.

As with the Paschal Candle, this procession was also a clear and shining example of theology in motion. Those who approach the font are compared to the hart in Psalm 41 which yearns for the fountain of living water. It would be useful to keep this visual metaphor in mind when we come to examine the reformed version.

A liturgical shambles

As a result of the invidious schemes drawn up by the 1948 Commission, what happened next put another blot on its already sullied record. True to form, the Commission played havoc with the part of the Easter Vigil liturgy following the reading of the Prophecies, turning what was one of the most ancient and supreme works of Catholic Tradition into what can only be described as a scene of total disorder and confusion. As we shall see, this section of the Easter Vigil was radically reconfigured, and became a farrago of structural and ritual changes peppered with inconsistencies and quirks.

Instead of blessing the water and administering Baptisms in the designated place where the font is located, these actions were performed in the sanctuary while the priest faced the people (“*coram populo*”). This necessitated the use of a bucket or other receptacle for the baptismal water while the font, which had been in continuous use for 16 centuries, was suddenly made redundant and its symbolic importance consequently diminished.

Mgr Gromier pointed out at the time the effects of dislocating the symbolism of the font from its liturgical context:

“Baptismal fonts, baptismal water and Baptism go together as one. A spectacular innovation that deliberately separates them, installing substitutes for the font in the sanctuary and baptising in them, then using this receptacle for transferring the baptismal water to the font is an insult to history, to discipline, to the liturgy and common sense”. [341](#)

He was vilified by the liturgical establishment for daring to criticize the Holy Week reform. It is richly ironic that he was regarded as having lost his wits, when it was the authors of that reform who appear to have lost their liturgical compass. The revised ceremony of the baptismal water did indeed fly in the face of logic and common sense.

Mismatch between text and ritual

To begin with, it made nonsense of the metaphor of the thirsty deer in Psalm 41 which symbolizes those who approach the font longing for the waters of Baptism. But in the reformed rite this symbolism is rendered incoherent because the Psalm is sung *after* the blessing of the water and conferral of Baptism, in other words *after* the deer has slaked his thirst. To add to the confusion, the Psalm is sung while the procession is heading towards a completely dry font whose role in the ceremony is merely functional – to be the receptacle for the remaining contents of the baptismal bucket.

Mismatch between liturgical architecture and ritual

Secondly, with the relocation of the ceremony away from the font (traditionally placed near the entrance to the parish church), the architectural symbolism of Baptism as the *janua Sacramentorum* (the gateway to the Sacraments and the beginning of a new life in the Church) was lost.

Confusion between clergy and laity

Thirdly, and worst of all, is the use of the sanctuary as a makeshift baptistery. It was a radical departure from Tradition because it involved the

intrusion of lay people (the not-yet-baptized and their sponsors) into the sanctuary, the place set apart for the clergy.

This was arguably worse than the foot-washing ceremony of Holy Thursday which allowed laymen to enter the sanctuary. For if, in the reformed the Easter Vigil, even the unbaptized were given the same privilege as those in Holy Orders – i.e. of entering the sanctuary – the impression is given that Original Sin can safely be ignored as of little consequence. That was, of course, precisely what happened in the *Novus Ordo* reforms, particularly in the new rite of Baptism.

A distracting interruption

Fourthly, the reformers broke the liturgy free from its accepted context and logic in yet another way.

In the pre-1956 rite, the Litany of the Saints was sung integrally after the blessing of the water and the administration of Baptism. But in the reform the Litany, which was deemed to be too long and repetitive, was split in two, with a medley of ceremonies sandwiched between the two parts – the blessing of the water, the administration of Baptism, an entirely novel “Renewal of Baptismal Promises”, and the procession to the font.

The original symbolism was a clear indication that the newly baptized were incorporated into the Communion of Saints. But this connection was lost by the structural ambiguity of the two disjointed fragments of the Litany. When the chanting suddenly stops in mid-stream and the scene shifts to “active participation” in the sanctuary, only to be resumed later, it is questionable what exactly is in the forefront of the people’s minds – God or themselves – at any given point. One could call this reform a weapon of mass distraction.

Before the reform of Holy Week, both architecture and rite had functioned symbiotically as a sort of map which could be “read” to show the hierarchical nature of the Church and the road to Heaven. Liturgically, everything was “in its place” for a good reason – to symbolize the constitution of the Church and the unity of the Faith. A Catholic identity was made manifest.

When the map was modified in 1956 – it would be torn up completely a few years later – confusion as to the basic sense of Catholic order and certitude was bound to set in. The disorderly combination of elements devised by the reformers resulted in identities lost and distinctions blended.

Why this shifting of landscapes, this rearranging of the furniture of the church building and even its internal geography?

In an article written straight after the reform, Fr Antonelli provided the answer in a nutshell: “to bring the faithful back to active and conscious participation” in the liturgy. Echoing Beauduin’s “grand narrative” of the Liturgical Movement, he said that in recent centuries the faithful had become “no more than silent spectators” divorced from the “liturgical action”; this had become exclusively the preserve of the clergy who were separated from the congregation by a “closed sanctuary”. As the spokesman for the Liturgical Commission, he said that all the Holy Week reforms were fully justified on the grounds that they procured the “direct participation of the faithful in the liturgical action”. At the same time, he repeated almost word for word Beauduin’s propaganda trope (see Chapter 3, p. 31) that the laity should not be “spectators” in the liturgical action, but “actors”. [342](#)

A toxic innuendo

Fr Antonelli’s remarks contain underlying assumptions and biases, drawn from the Liturgical Movement, which entail a slow poisoning of the mind against a true appreciation of lay participation. There is no evidence that the laity felt in the least disadvantaged *vis-à-vis* the clergy at not being allowed to enter the sanctuary. Yet Fr Antonelli presented the reform as a means of enabling them finally to enjoy the privilege that they had supposedly long been denied by the clerical patriarchy.

It was on the basis of this fabricated pretext that the Commission introduced the idea which was to revolutionize the whole of liturgical life – that the Church had a duty to redress the injustice done to the laity and change a system that was deemed inimical to them. And it was on that basis that the reformers were prepared to break with the accepted forms, symbolism and logic of immemorial tradition to craft a new rite for the Easter Vigil and promote a new paradigm, that of “active participation” for the laity.

A symptom of decay

This is incontrovertible evidence that the reformed Easter Vigil was the first act in the tragedy that would be played out in the *Novus Ordo* reforms. It set in motion a dynamic of discontinuity with Tradition that would prove impossible to stop, the 1962 Missal notwithstanding. For, it was the

precondition for the reshaping of the entire liturgy which would progressively destroy the Church's immemorial traditions. No wonder the progressivists were so keen to make a start on it in 1951.

The Renewal of Baptismal Promises

It is noteworthy that, before 1956, the Renewal of Baptismal Promises was never part of the official liturgy of the Roman Rite, but only a semi-private "para-liturgy" conducted among special groups in retreats, missions, anniversaries of one's Baptism, and at the First Communion of children. An important factor is that these ceremonies were introduced on the initiative of individual pastors at the local level. Not all of them were performed in church. There was no set formula of words. And as their occurrence was only sporadic, they did not constitute anything approaching a universal custom.

When the Renewal of Baptismal Promises was first introduced experimentally at the Easter Vigil in 1951, it was presented as an ancient liturgical tradition that had fallen into disuse and needed to be restored. But, like so many of the reformers' spurious claims of liturgical "restoration", the historical basis for this claim is tenuous and lacking in contextual detail.

Historically, the Church had always discouraged attempts to give the Renewal of Baptismal Promises a place in the liturgy. One brief but indicative example was when Erasmus proposed a ritual in 1522 for adolescents to renew their baptismal vows; his suggestion was censored by the foremost Scholastic theologian of the day, Noël Beda, ³⁴³ and his work placed on the Index by Pope Paul IV in 1559. ³⁴⁴

It was, therefore, a major innovation when Pius XII, acting at the behest of his 1948 Commission, suddenly imposed the rite by *force majeure* on the whole Church in 1956. It was also something of a coup for the Liturgical Movement which had long been agitating for its inclusion in the liturgy.

As early as the 1920s, Dom Virgil Michel OSB, reputedly the "father of the Liturgical Movement in the USA", had designed a ritual for the Renewal of Baptismal Promises which he described in an article in *Orate Fratres*. ³⁴⁵ Dom Godfrey Diekmann OSB, Michel's successor as editor of *Orate Fratres*, further promoted the ceremony during the First National Liturgical Week at Chicago in 1940. Then, the 1948 papal Liturgical Commission included in its *Memoria* (n. 74) a proposal for the Renewal of

Baptismal Promises to be elaborated by a sub-commission and submitted to the Pope for his approval.

Only one of the Consultors of the papal Commission, however, had misgivings about the appropriateness of this rite in the Easter Vigil. Dom Bernard Capelle, to grant him his due, was opposed to this reform and expressed his disagreement in forceful terms:

- its introduction was unnecessary (“*Nulla habetur necessitas*”);
- it gave primacy to the theme of Baptism over the Resurrection, thus compromising the theological meaning of the Vigil;
- it was a total novelty (“*ex toto novorum*”) lacking any historical claim to liturgical usage;
- it should not be used at the Easter Vigil as a substitute for Baptism. [346](#)

But his objections were brushed aside, and the new Vigil went ahead on an experimental basis in 1951 with the approval of Pius XII, before being imposed universally in 1956.

A rite inspired by Protestantism

As a liturgical rite, the Renewal of Baptismal Promises emerged from the Reformation; it was first recorded in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer [347](#) as part of the Protestant “confirmation” rite. [348](#)

The ritual is conducted in both the Protestant and revised Catholic liturgies on similar lines. The Bishop or priest faces the people, gives a short address and conducts a “dialogue” in the vernacular with the whole congregation. It is not surprising, therefore, that this ceremony, alien to any Catholic concept of the *lex credendi*, would clash egregiously with the *lex orandi*. This is glaringly obvious both in its outward form and in its ambiguous theological import.

This was the first time in the history of the Church that a ceremony of Protestant inspiration and ethos was officially incorporated into the liturgy, but, as the *Novus Ordo* would amply demonstrate, it was not the last.

Muddying the waters of Baptism

Fr Antonelli explained that the Renewal was among those practices “to be restored if their reintroduction would truly render the rites more pure and more intelligible to the minds of the faithful”. ³⁴⁹ But how intelligible is it? And what exactly is renewed?

We need to consider and ask: in what sense can one “renew” permanent vows as distinct from temporary vows which can be renewed periodically? To do so liturgically could easily give the impression that Baptism is ephemeral, as if the original vows had passed their expiry date and needed to be, as it were, “topped up” for another year.

It makes sense to *recall* our baptismal vows, to ponder how far we have fallen short of them, as the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* recommended, to *reaffirm* our adherence to the Faith, and to *renew* our efforts to progress in the spiritual life with the aid of the Mass and the Sacraments. It reassured priests administering Baptism that the faithful would be edified by witnessing the rite: “Thus each person, reading a lesson of admonition in the person of him who is receiving Baptism, calls to mind the promises by which he had bound himself to the service of God when initiated by Baptism, and reflects whether his life and morals evince that fidelity to which everyone pledges himself, by professing the name of Christian”.

That much is crystal clear. What is not so clear is the term “Renewal” of Baptismal Promises. The problem is that it is **potentially dangerous in its lack of precision**, rendering it unsuitable for inclusion in the liturgy. For, Baptism *is* the renewal, whereby one goes into the church unbaptized and comes out a Christian. One can never be in that unique position again, and although baptismal grace can be lost, the force of the original vows remains unchanged. They cannot, therefore, be said to stand in need of renewal.

Next, we shall consider how the new ritual further destabilized the Easter Vigil by changing its theological focus from Christ to the people, all for the sake of their “active participation”.

The new governing principle: activities for the people

Fr Godfrey Diekmann OSB, a key member of the Liturgical Movement, noted in 1953:

“Especially noteworthy is the eagerness of the Holy See to encourage the intelligent and active assistance of the congregation. It is for this reason that most of the changes have been introduced: **all** are to receive and hold the flame from the Easter Candle; **all** are to join in the responses and in the Litany [of the Saints]; **all** are to hear and understand the readings; **all** are to renew their baptismal promises; the services are so arranged in the sanctuary that **all** may see, etc”. [emphases added] [350](#)

It is obvious that this was an overarching, “totalizing” program of reform, leaving no member of the laity unaffected, no individual immune from moral coercion or even harassment. Its implications went far beyond the practicalities of whether to stand or sit, light a candle, use Latin or the vernacular. It was fundamentally about a new ecclesiology, what kind of Church was being planned for the future – one, as it turned out, in which the whole idea of the sacramental Priesthood was to be merged seamlessly into that of the People of God actively engaged around the altar.

Liturgical gimmickry

In the Renewal of Baptismal Promises, the people engage in “active participation” by re-lighting their candles – which they had lit and extinguished only a short while earlier – passing the flame on to others in the congregation, balancing a book in one hand and a burning candle in the other, supervising one’s children who are precariously holding lighted candles, listening and responding to the priest in a “dialogue” and joining him in the communal recitation of the Our Father (as on Good Friday).

Juggling so many balls in the air and jumping through various hoops takes the soul, mind and body *away* from the necessary focus on Christ and from contemplative prayer. One may well ask: where did the Mystery go? For while the mind is concentrating on these sundry distractions and novelties, and while the people are busy thinking of *themselves*, the whole focus of the Easter Vigil – contemplating the Death and Resurrection of Christ – is pushed aside.

An admission of failure

Even the liturgical pioneer, Fr Clifford Howell, who enthusiastically welcomed the Holy Week reforms, could not fail to notice the superficiality of the Easter Vigil novelties including the innovative Renewal of Baptismal

Promises, and their inability to move the soul. He expressed his concern about what would happen when the initial effects had worn off:

“It may well be that the people have been delighted with the novelty, with its picturesqueness, with the thrill of having something interesting to watch and to do, with the impressiveness of the gradual spread of the candle flames in the darkened church. They have been captivated, indeed: but perhaps, as yet, only with the externals. . . It is imperative, therefore, that the appreciation which the faithful now have of this ceremony should be deepened; they must be helped to penetrate through these externals, and to achieve that renewal of mind and heart and will which alone constitutes the genuine good of their souls”. [351](#)

In other words, in spite of the pyrotechnics (huge, leaping bonfires lighting up the night sky, the plethora of flickering candles in a darkened church), the effect could hardly be described as a flood of illumination into the soul. Besides, the Easter Vigil is no place for cheap theatrics and stunts to pull in the crowds.

But what we do know, however, is that the Church had been remarkably successful throughout the centuries in providing for the sanctification of the faithful in the Mass and the Sacraments, as evidenced by the countless saints and pious souls who had received their spiritual sustenance thereby. For, the traditional *lex orandi* was the single most effective vehicle ever devised for achieving that goal – which raises the question as to why the reform was considered necessary in the first place.

Yet these innovations, despite their manifest flaws, were given exclusivity and predominance over the tried and tested rituals of Tradition.

A meaningful reform?

The 1956 Renewal of Baptismal Promises was not without inherent problems in comprehensibility, notwithstanding the use of the vernacular which was supposed to make the liturgy easier for the people to understand.

The fundamental problem is the corporate nature of the so-called Renewal in which the people respond in the plural, “we do”/“we believe”, when asked if they renounce Satan and accept certain articles of the Faith.

To begin with, no one can confess another’s faith, for no one – apart from God – knows what all the others actually believe. What one believes may

be different from what the person next to him believes, so that “we” may not always be of one mind.

Similarly for the promises: as they presuppose the full consent of the individual will, no one can vouch for others in the congregation who shout out promises they may or may not sincerely mean.

Clearly, then, the Renewal of Baptismal Promises raises problems of an epistemological nature which illustrate the incoherence of the reformers’ avowed intention to create a “more meaningful” liturgy to enable the “intelligent participation” of the laity. It also highlights the futility of giving the congregation a vocal role in the liturgy.

The battle of “I” versus “we”

Ever since 1956, and right up to the present day, a controversy has been raging over whether to use “I” or “we” in the liturgy, with the progressivists favouring the latter because of its “communitarian” significance. [352](#)

Some traditionalists, wishing to continue the 1956 reforms while at the same time realizing the spurious nature of these community-based activities, switched to the use of “I” instead of “we”. But they do so on their own initiative, for the plural forms in Latin – *abrenuntiamus* (we do renounce) and *credimus* (we believe) – are contained in the 1962 Missal.

It is noteworthy that the response *abrenuntiamus* – a six-syllable tongue-twister that many people could only pronounce with difficulty and after much practice, while some could not manage to do so at all – can hardly be said to lend itself to congregational participation. But this was of little concern to the reformers, however, who were aiming for an all-vernacular liturgy.

More false rationalizations

So what exactly was the point of the Renewal of Baptismal Promises in the Easter Vigil?

All modern commentaries concur that it is “very important” to renew liturgically our baptismal vows, but it is remarkable that not a single valid reason has been adduced as to why – which is hardly surprising, since there was no need for it in the first place, as Dom Capelle had stated.

So, in the absence of a reason, a rationale had to be invented. This was provided by one of the Commission members, Fr Josef Löw. Using an expression taken directly from Dom Virgil Michel, he stated that the

purpose of the reform was to “stir up again a proper Baptism-consciousness” so as “to restore the full significance of Easter” by “bringing the feast of Easter to life again in its totality”. [353](#)

This was less an explanation than an attack on Tradition. The clear implication of these words is that the true meaning of the Easter Vigil had been obscured and mutilated in the liturgy since the end of the early Christian era – and it would be the task of the Commission to bring the Church back to those early centuries.

Quite apart from the insinuation that the Church’s ceremonies, prayers, readings and chants for Holy Saturday had been deficient, even moribund, for over 1600 years, these words, written in 1953, reveal something more sinister about the Commission. The ordering and meaning of the Catholic worship was now in the hands of the reformers who began systematically to replace rituals which transmitted a sense of reverence and awe in the presence of God with “simplified” man-centred constructs promoting “active participation”. Here we see the first glimmerings of a new approach to liturgy – known later as “horizontalism”. One could say that the decline of the sense of the sacred began with the 1951-56 Holy Week changes.

18. DECLINE OF THE PENITENTIAL SPIRIT

Interrupting traditional patterns of thought and behaviour

In all the preceding centuries, the Easter Vigil was regarded as the culmination of Lent, a long period in which the faithful focused intensely on sin, penance and personal conversion as a preparation for the spiritual renewal associated with Easter. That is why the custom arose of making a “good Confession” on Holy Saturday evening.

The main point of the Easter Vigil was, therefore, always understood to be a penitential preparation for receiving the graces of Christ’s Resurrection.

Not so, however, in the parallel universe of the 1948 Commission. In Chapter 3 of the *Memoria*, Fr Antonelli explained that they made the theme of Baptism the centre of the Easter Vigil. Fr Löw stated that Baptism was “the most important part of the Vigil celebration” and that our Renewal of Baptismal Promises was, “above all”, its highlight. [354](#)

The Sacrament of Confession actively discouraged at the Easter Vigil

Before the 1956 reforms, long lines of penitents were a familiar sight in every church on Holy Saturday evening, and priests devoted 6 or 7 hours to hearing their confessions, sometimes until midnight. Changing the Easter Vigil ceremonies to the evening hours, therefore, gave rise to a major problem of the Commission’s own making: how to stem the great influx of people into the churches for Confession on the holiest night of the year.

When the Congregation of Rites issued a Decree in 1952 renewing the experimental Vigil for another three years, its regulations explicitly ordered that parish priests should advise the faithful to choose other days instead. [355](#)

The politics of hypocrisy and cynicism

It was only a derisory solution. Traditionally, the other days of the Triduum were fully occupied either with liturgical services or popular devotions

related to Holy Week. Fr Löw assured the faithful that they could go to Confession on Holy Saturday morning which, in the new dispensation, would be free. [356](#) But this conflicts with his previous assertion a few lines earlier that the Vigil was moved to the evening because “the hours of morning are in the case of many Catholics impossible for church services” on account of their work schedules. [357](#)

What exposes the hollowness of his principles is the fact that he was even prepared to leave the majority of them stranded without Confession, as priests would no longer be available to minister to them. What is “pastoral” about preventing people from accessing the Sacrament of Confession at a time that was most convenient for them? So much for the “pastoral” concern behind the reform. Fr Löw airily dismissed the problem on the grounds that “through proper instruction and training of the faithful” they would be made to accept the new ways.

More traditions broken on the wheel of Progressivism

A new set of expectations was now in place: they were to renew their baptismal promises instead. Fr Löw described this new rite as “the best condition for a good spiritually fruitful celebration of Easter Sunday”. [358](#) But what about the Sacrament of Penance which, according to Tradition, was considered the optimal means of preparing for Holy Communion at Easter? It was totally eclipsed by a mere novelty, the Renewal of Baptismal Promises; and its importance was diminished in the eyes of priests and faithful by being relegated to a random sometime/anytime framework. Once again, as we have so often observed, a living bond connecting the faithful to their past was dangerously frayed.

The same treatment was meted out to the many long-standing traditions and customs, too numerous to mention here, through the wholesale disruption of the timing of the Triduum services in the Holy Week reform. The hostility of the reformers to these customs is evident from Fr Antonelli’s disparaging remark that “there were too many popular customs especially in connection with Holy Saturday”. [359](#)

A notable example was the blessing of homes by the parish priest on Holy Saturday evening. This was done on that particular night of the liturgical year in memory of the Old Testament “Passover” or passing of the angel in

Egypt and the signing of the door-posts with the blood of the sacrificial lamb. In spite of its biblical symbolism and the obvious analogy with the true Paschal Lamb whose death enabled mankind to “pass over” from death to eternal life, the Instruction accompanying *Maxima Redemptionis* (1955) ordered it to be carried out on any day *except* Holy Saturday evening. ³⁶⁰ Thus, the intrinsic significance of this custom was destroyed.

The ancient tradition of the folded chasuble

How many people in the Church today, whether clergy or laity, ever saw or heard of the clerical vestment known as the “folded chasuble” (*planeta plicata*)? Precisely.

So, first, a few words about its use and significance are needed to put the reader into the picture. The folded chasuble acquired its name from the ancient custom of shortening the fore part of the chasuble by folding it upwards and pinning it in place. It was worn only by the deacon and subdeacon during penitential seasons, including Holy Week, in place of their usual dalmatic and tunicle, as a symbol of penance. Furthermore, at appropriate points in the liturgy, the deacon would lay aside the folded chasuble and don the “broad stole” (*stola largior*) in its place, worn in bandolier fashion. It too has been eliminated.

If hardly anyone today has any knowledge, let alone experience, of these liturgical vestments, it is because Bugnini’s Commission had done such a thorough job in erasing them from the collective memory. “No one will miss the folded chasuble”, ³⁶¹ he said breezily in 1956 while cavalierly tossing aside an item of clerical apparel which, as Mgr Léon Gromier explained in his 1960 lecture, could hardly have been more ancient or more Roman:

“Folded chasubles are one of the oldest characteristics of the Roman Rite; they go back to the time when all the clergy wore chasubles, and were **the expression of austere penance**. Their abolition makes nonsense of the painting in the Catacombs – an **immense loss** and an outrage to history”. ³⁶² [emphases added]

Early sign of decline in the penitential spirit

The Commission’s decision in 1956 to eliminate this symbol of penance is a sad, though unsurprising, indictment of the direction in which the reform

was heading. Its disappearance from Holy Week, the season quintessentially dedicated to the Passion and Death of Christ, heralded its disappearance from all other penitential days of the liturgical year – at least what was left of them after the *Novus Ordo* reforms.

In the Holy Week reform of 1956, the maniple was no longer used for Good Friday, and the obligation to use it in the rest of the Liturgical Year ceased in 1967. This was mentioned in the Instruction *Tres abhinc annos* §25: “*Manipulus semper omitti potest*” (The maniple can always be omitted). The wording, however, leaves the question open as to whether it was actually prohibited.

When Pope John XXIII approved the new Code of Rubrics in his *motu proprio Rubricarum instructum* of 25 July 1960, and imposed its observance on all who used the Roman Rite as from 1 January 1961, he stated that folded chasubles and the broad stole are no longer relevant. [363](#) But, as the wording of the document is phrased more as an observation than a command, a small number of priests using the 1962 Missal recently began to wonder if the immemorial custom was actually ended. Upon finding that it has not been abrogated, a few of them began to reinstate their use in the Holy Week ceremonies.

However, for the large majority of Catholic priests today, who have not been formed in the traditional ascetical spirituality, it would be difficult for them to imagine the immensity of this loss to which Mgr Gromier referred. They would almost certainly look upon any controversy over the folded chasuble as a tendency to quarrel over trifles. As they would say about the maniple which suffered a similar fate at the hands of the reformers: “why so much fuss over a strip of cloth?”

Those who maintain this position, however, merely demonstrate the anti-traditional mindset in which the reform was conceived. A matter should be considered insignificant only if it can be demonstrated to be trivial and inconsequential. But how trivial was the abandonment of the folded chasuble, and what were the consequences of its suppression? When we look at precisely what that tradition sought to protect, we will see that the subject at the heart of this matter could not be less trivial.

Importance of the folded chasuble

Such was the profound significance of the folded chasuble that it was linked in the mind of the Church to the divine precept of penitence which is

especially incumbent on priests – more so than on the laity – as they are more closely conformed to Christ through the sacred character of their ordination.

It was once common knowledge that this liturgical garment expressed the priestly identity in clear and unambiguous terms: as an *alter Christus*, the priest is closely linked with the “Man of Sorrows” Who wrought our redemption from sin. One could even say that the folded chasuble was an external reminder to the priest of his commitment to celibacy, interiorly assisting him on his penitential road to holiness. Penitence was, therefore, intrinsic to the nature of the ordained priesthood and, for that reason, was made perceptible to the priest (and to others) by a visible outward sign – the wearing of the folded chasuble.

Where the “immense loss” was most evident, then, was among the clergy, as many would cast off the spirit of penitence together with their folded chasubles. This loss marked the beginning of the radical shift that eliminated the old rules and regulations about fasting, abstinence and penance understood as ascetical exercises. History has shown the extent to which many of the clergy would gradually lose any understanding of, or attachment to, the Church’s traditional discipline.

Why is it that the immemorial custom of the folded chasuble, which had been received and approved by the Church throughout the centuries, came to an abrupt end in the mid-20th century? How come that a tradition which made such a prodigious contribution to the spiritual lives of the clergy suddenly became an item of the Church’s ancient past?

As many incidents in the Protestant Reformation and in recent Catholic history have shown, liturgical symbols were suppressed in an attempt to stamp out or minimize the beliefs they stood for.

Here we can see the underlying reason why Bugnini and the Commission were so keen to ensure that the folded chasuble made its way out of liturgical history. The new liturgy that was being planned by the reformers would have no place for the emphasis on sin, penance and the unworthiness of man that featured prominently in the traditional liturgy. Such “negative” concepts would soon be in full retreat as a necessary consequence of the advance of the new “positive” view of the goodness of man ushered in by Vatican II. Indeed, the very concept of penitence was made largely irrelevant by Vatican II’s emphasis on the joys of being “liberated” from the

so-called “prophets of doom” who preached about the guilt and shame associated with sin.

Therefore, the folded chasuble would be viewed as an anachronism in the “renewed” liturgy where the spirit of penance and asceticism, so repugnant to modern man, would be played down, while the discipline of fasting would be relaxed almost to vanishing point. It is not surprising that both penance and sacrifice have been obscured in the *Novus Ordo*.

To sum up: the ancient tradition of folded chasubles disappeared officially from the liturgy in Holy Week 1956 [364](#) and from the rest of the Liturgical Year in 1960.

From high profile to oblivion

Before their suppression, folded chasubles had enjoyed a high profile in the liturgy, being worn for a considerable portion of the liturgical year:

- the Sundays and ferias of Advent and Lent (except *Gaudete* and *Laetare* Sunday and Christmas Eve);
- Palm Sunday, Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and the rest of Holy Week (except on Maundy Thursday and during the blessing of the Paschal Candle and the Mass of Holy Saturday);
- the Vigil of Pentecost before Mass;
- Ember Days (except those in the Octave of Pentecost);
- Candlemas during the blessing of candles and the procession. [365](#)

This requirement applied not only to cathedrals and collegiate churches but to larger parish churches and the chief churches of religious orders where a solemn penitential liturgy was performed with the assistance of a deacon and subdeacon.

In an interesting aside, the liturgical historian, Fr Josef Braun SJ, noted in 1914 that folded chasubles first went out of use among some deacons and subdeacons in Germany at the beginning of the 20th century. [366](#)

A dropped stitch

The excuse given for discarding the folded chasuble was that the Church could drop “outmoded” symbolism so as to set free the “inner spirit” of

penance and make it more accessible to modern man. But destroying outward forms which had been consecrated by centuries of Tradition, far from liberating the spirit that inspired those forms, caused both loss of form *and* spirit – as a visit to a modern-day *Novus Ordo* would amply confirm.

By its deliberate decision to abandon the folded chasuble, Pius XII's Commission pitted itself not only against the authority of Tradition, but also against a symbol of those core values to which centuries of priests had given their allegiance. Its abolition by Pius XII in the 1956 Holy Week reform was only one strand in a far wider fabric of measures which would later be adopted by the reformers to eliminate traditions which made visible and apparent key concepts of the priesthood.

Such a move was bound to contribute to the current crisis in the identity of the priest by affecting the way he would view his vocation – no longer as the dispenser of the mysteries of God, set apart from the people to offer the Holy Sacrifice in the place of Christ. For, just as the folded chasuble was a symbolic expression of penitence and sacrifice, its discarding presaged, as history has shown, a change in the very concept of the priesthood by obscuring the link between Calvary and the Mass.

Like a dropped stitch in a knitted garment, the loss of the folded chasuble caused some essentials of priestly spirituality to begin to unravel.

From this, we can see the gravity of discarding a tradition which had for centuries been a significant element in the Roman Rite. Inevitably, if immemorial traditions are suddenly discontinued, knowledge of the spiritual content which they enshrined is also extinguished. For those customs were embodied in the traditional liturgy and helped to spread the true Catholic Faith.

One person who did understand all this very clearly was Mgr Gromier. The fact that both Mgr Gromier himself and the folded chasubles about which he spoke with great pride are now regarded as curious remnants of the Church's ancient past and of no importance to modern times, is a telling example of the long-term effects of the Holy Week reforms.

With Pius XII and his successors allowing the liturgical reformers to promote themselves as an influential force in the Church's public liturgy, who can be surprised when, in our day, penance itself has become outdated? Indeed, it has become almost obsolete.

The perfect “insider job”

While virtually the whole Church was peacefully following the Roman Rite under Pius XII without evincing the least dissatisfaction, the Liturgical Commission, in conjunction with the Congregation of Rites, was enthusiastically stirring the pot that would later be served up at Vatican II.

That the Holy Week reform was originally the work of the 1948 Commission is obvious from the fact that the 1955 Decree *Maxima Redemptionis* was signed by Cardinal Micara in his dual capacity as Pro-Prefect of the Congregation of Rites and President of the Commission. Fr Löw was not only a member of the Commission but, as Vice-Relator of the Congregation of Rites, he was also responsible for editing and presenting the Commission's ideas to the rest of the Congregation.

Another leading Commission member, Fr Antonelli, would soon be appointed as Relator-General to the Congregation of Rites (1956), prior to becoming Secretary of the Conciliar Commission for the Liturgy (1962) and Secretary of the Congregation of Rites (1965).

Thus, the radical reconstruction of the Easter Vigil and the abolition of some of its ceremonies were the precondition for that control-by-committee which would be the hallmark of all future developments in the liturgy. This means that the papal Commission was effectively given the power to dictate the reforms on the basis of nothing more than their own prejudices and, furthermore, that Pius XII allowed the inventions of the reformers to take precedence over the rights of the faithful to their own Tradition.

19. MOST VIGILS AND OCTAVES ABOLISHED IN 1955

Before 1956, the General Calendar had 18 Vigils. With the Decree *Cum nostra hac aetate* of 23 March 1955, Pius XII abolished more than half of them, as follows:

- Vigil of the Epiphany (5 January)
- Vigil of St Andrew (29 November)
- Vigil of Sts Simon and Jude (27 October)
- Vigil of St James the Greater (24 July)
- Vigil of St Thomas (20 December)
- Vigil of St Matthias (23 February)
- Vigil of St Bartholomew (23 August)
- Vigil of St Matthew (20 September)
- Vigil of the Immaculate Conception (7 December)
- Vigil of All Saints (31 October)

No sound reason for suppression

When the Commission appointed by Pius XII in 1948 drew up plans for the general reform of the liturgy, it decided to excise most of the Church's Vigils and Octaves without, as it turns out, any reasonable justification for such radical surgery. The *official* reason given by the Congregation of Rites in its 1955 Decree was for the sake of "simplification". But the underlying motivation for the excision of Vigils was revealed in the Commission's *Memoria* to be the reformers' lack of appreciation for and even antipathy to the traditional liturgy. Bugnini and his colleagues wanted to be rid of them on the following pretext:

“In sum, the institution of Vigils gradually lost its authentic character, and became a type of lifeless liturgical formality”. ³⁶⁷

This biased and unwarranted assumption became the driving force of the Commission’s determination to suppress most of the Church’s ancient Vigils. The reformers considered that, just as dead wood has to be cut away to save the plant, “simplification”, i.e. excision, was deemed necessary to obviate the “harm” that the “lifeless” traditional rites can do to the common good.

Fr Antonelli, who was one of the Commission’s most influential members, gave a more detailed explanation of the 1955 Decree:

“Actually, the true purpose of the much-desired simplification of the rubrics is not at all, as some may have thought, to reduce the public prayer of the Church to more limited dimensions. It is rather to free it from all those *formalistic and complicated elements*, usually of late origin, which have become a burden to the ‘sacrifice of praise’ and have gradually changed the original sobriety of its structure. In practice, these *formalistic complications* have become an annoyance and a hindrance to that *living participation* which the whole liturgy of its nature demands. Thus, the purpose in eliminating them is not to pray less but to pray better. That is the spirit of the decree”. ³⁶⁸ [Emphases added]

But what sort of reform presumes that all “formalistic and complicated” structures are unauthentic and “lifeless”? The answer is obvious: one that was in lockstep with Beauduin’s ideas for liturgical reform. (See Chapter 3) Here is the clearest possible indication that the Commission condemned the traditional rites on the assumption that they were not only ineffective and unproductive, but also positively harmful, an obstacle to true participation (and hence to the reception of the graces necessary for salvation).

Could any greater calumny or unjust reproach be conceived against the traditional Roman liturgy, described by Cardinal Ottaviani as “the most complete monument of the Faith”, which has nourished the souls of countless Catholics and produced an abundance of Saints?

In their deprecation of the traditional rites, the reformers failed to appreciate that the purpose of having rigid formulas and complex rubrics was, as Cardinal Ottaviani pointed out, to act as “theological ramparts erected for the protection of the rite”, and as a “formidable barrier against heresy”, in order to ensure stability of doctrine down the centuries.

As subsequent developments have shown, the razing of these bastions of orthodoxy gave rise to many deviations in the *lex orandi*, chief among them the *Novus Ordo*, which have the potential to sow confusion among the faithful and undermine the Faith.

What happened to the Vigil of Pentecost in 1956?

In this chapter, we will consider in some detail the fate of the Vigil of Pentecost in the 1956 reform of the Calendar. Although it was not on the above list of suppressed Vigils, it underwent such severe mutilation that it can be considered to have been *de facto* abolished.

The venerable texts and rituals of the Vigil of Pentecost were already doomed to extinction by 1950. When asked whether it would be appropriate to abolish these ceremonies, all three consultors to Pius XII's Commission – Jungmann, Capelle and Righetti – agreed unanimously that they should be excised. [369](#)

And so the axe of the Commission's arbitrary liturgical standards was once more swung against the Church's ancient traditions. As early as 1952, all of these ceremonies of the Vigil of Pentecost were prohibited in any church where the experimental Easter Vigil was celebrated. Then, in 1956, they were universally suppressed, with the approval of Pius XII, for the entire Roman Rite.

It is still commonly believed that when the 1955 Decree "purged" the Roman Calendar, the Vigil of Pentecost was spared. But that would be only a half-truth, for, as we shall see, it was suppressed in all but name, cast aside and then forgotten within the space of one generation. All that was left virtually intact was the Vigil Mass which, in an Orwellian feat, retained its historic title in the Calendar, so that future generations would not realize what exactly they had lost.

And so it came to pass, with the not-too-unpredictable result, that traditionalists today are generally unaware that while their 1962 liturgy is still formally called the Vigil of Pentecost, it has not much left in it that is traditional.

The traditional Vigil of Pentecost

From the earliest centuries of the Church, Pentecost had a Baptismal Vigil similar in form to that of Easter. We can see evidence of the baptismal

character of these rites, for example, in the 8th-century Gregorian Sacramentary which records the liturgy of earlier centuries, providing proof that the Vigil Mass took place “*post ascensum fontis*” (i.e. after the ceremony at the font).

When Pope St Pius V codified the Roman Missal in 1570, the Vigil of Pentecost contained texts and ceremonies handed down from previous centuries, including the following:

- 6 readings from the Old Testament (Prophecies) and 3 Tracts, all taken from Holy Saturday;
- 6 Collects on the theme of Baptism;
- recitation of the Prophecies by the priest while another minister chanted them;
- procession of the clergy to the font;
- blessing of the font;
- administration of Baptism;
- singing of the Litany of the Saints;
- use of folded chasubles before the celebration of the Vigil Mass.

The most noticeable feature of this ensemble of rituals was that they echoed parts of the Holy Saturday liturgy as it had been celebrated in the great cathedrals of Christendom long before Pius V codified the Roman Missal. Up to the mid-20th century, the importance of keeping the baptismal nature of the Vigil was universally recognized. To celebrate the Pentecost Vigil without preparing for it with full Baptism-related rites (except in churches without a font ³⁷⁰) was just unthinkable to our forefathers in the Faith. Fr Adrian Fortescue mentioned that the blessing of the font was “a strict obligation”. ³⁷¹ And the pre-1952 *Rituale Romanum* insists in the strongest possible terms that the baptismal rite must be retained:

“There are two holy days in which the solemn celebration of this Sacrament (of Baptism) is especially fitting: as is well known, Holy Saturday and the Vigil of Pentecost... it is right and proper for this rite to be retained, in the

sense that it should certainly not be completely omitted, particularly in Metropolitan and Cathedral churches”. [372](#)

To eliminate these rituals completely from the liturgy is to destroy the very identity of the Pentecost Vigil and its historic connection to Holy Saturday.

We can regard the two great Baptismal Vigils – of Easter and Pentecost – as two almost identical ornamental bookends on a shelf enclosing the 50 days between the two great Feasts. Together, they formed an artistically balanced showcase to highlight the splendour of one of the most important Seasons of the Church’s Liturgical Year.

Wanton vandalism

But the Liturgical Commission, like the proverbial bull in a china shop, defaced the first and smashed to smithereens the second of these beautifully crafted ornaments of the Liturgical Year. We have seen how the Vigil of Pentecost was twinned with the Easter Vigil, thus forming part of the balance and harmony that is characteristic of the Roman Rite. As such, it had long stood proudly aloft in the Calendar as a monument to the Faith, but it was brought crashing down in 1956, its shattered remains quickly swept under the carpet, as it were, lest any trace be left for posterity.

If a monument of sorts still remains in the 1962 Missal in the form of the Mass which survived unscathed, it is not so much as a reminder of Tradition as of the revolution that brought the Vigil down.

The liturgy impoverished

Historically, these preliminary ceremonies constituted a joint service with the Mass, the latter being the culmination of the whole Vigil. The two parts of the Vigil were regarded as inseparable, which explains why the Church ordered that both functions should be discharged by the same priest. [373](#)

Even though Baptism itself was not administered on every occasion, the associated ceremonies (Prophecies, procession, blessing of font and water, and litany) were, in fact, considered to be theologically more appropriate to Pentecost than to Easter. That is because they evoke the relationship between Baptism (“the re-birth”) and the coming of the Holy Spirit, “the giver of life” (Nicene Creed).

So cutting dead the baptismal rites of Pentecost deprived the Vigil at a stroke of a vital element of the Faith that had been given liturgical

expression from apostolic times.

The result of abolishing the baptismal ceremonies of the Vigil was a clean break with the *lex orandi* of almost two millennia, which in turn was bound to have a destabilizing effect on the *lex credendi* of the faithful. It is not generally known today that Pentecost was traditionally understood to be the baptismal feast *par excellence*. For it is the baptismal theme that makes Pentecost truly Pentecost, as it marked the birth of the Church's mission in the world after the Apostles were commanded to baptize all nations. This has been replaced by Vatican II's "New Pentecost" in which proselytism (making disciples of and baptizing all nations) is specifically denounced as no longer acceptable in the Catholic Church.

Mgr Gromier's knowledge of the Roman Rite was legendary, and his love and respect for the ancient traditions were unsurpassed. As the author of the *Commentary on the Ceremonial of Bishops* (1959), Mgr Gromier was recognized – and feared – in the Vatican and beyond as *the* 20th century's pre-eminent expert on the Roman Rite. Therefore, his assessment of the reform of the Pentecost Vigil (which he described as having been "massacred") is eminently worthy of credibility:

"The Vigil of Pentecost is stripped of its baptismal character, and has become a day like any other, and makes the Missal utter a falsehood in the Canon". [374](#)

Let us take each of these points in order.

Pentecost Vigil slighted

Even though the Vigil kept its title as a liturgical day of the first class, it nevertheless suffered a demotion in its dignity when it lost its baptismal ceremonies, as these had entitled it to a rank in the Calendar equal to the Easter Vigil. With the loss of its distinctive shape and rich theological content, the Pentecost Vigil suddenly became, as Mgr Gromier remarked, "a day like any other". What a comedown for a liturgical solemnity which had long enjoyed the highest honour of twinship with the Vigil of Easter, the "Queen of Feasts".

Let us not forget that this came about because of the Liturgical Commission's prejudice against Vigils in general, understood in the traditional sense of a *full liturgical day*, penitential in nature, observed by

fasting in preparation for a great Feast. As such, they no longer exist in the *Novus Ordo*. [375](#)

What happened to the 1962 Vigil of Pentecost was but the first step in this process of eliminating traditional Vigils from the Calendar. It was replaced in 1969 by an optional evening Mass with newly composed texts.

A bureaucratic bungle

Mgr Gromier's remark about the Canon of the Mass reveals the level of the Commission's incompetence. When the "experts" on the Commission cut out the baptismal rites that preceded the Vigil Mass, they either overlooked or chose to ignore the vital link between them and the prayer *Hanc igitur* in the Canon. From at least the 5th century, this prayer had its own Proper in the Pentecost Vigil (and was used, moreover, throughout the whole of Pentecost week), and its words were understood as a reference to the baptismal ceremonies preceding the Vigil Mass.

The problem was that the focus and meaning of the *Hanc igitur* were lost when the baptismal rites preceding the Vigil Mass were expunged from the Roman Missal, leaving the prayer in the Canon without its referent. The result, *horribile dictu*, was that the words of the celebrant in the *Hanc igitur* no longer corresponded with the Church's own *lex orandi* as it had been practised from time immemorial – hence Mgr Gromier's lament and his accusation that the altered Vigil belied the truth of the *Hanc igitur* in the Canon of the Mass.

In the traditional Missal, by contrast, the whole ensemble of Vigil rites had been faithfully preserved to express fully the Church's public witness to the Faith in her liturgy – that there is but one Baptism for the remission of sins, and that those who are baptized are re-born, in the words of the *Hanc igitur*, "from water and the Holy Ghost". The traditional Pentecost Vigil, therefore, had a specific purpose and design: to commemorate the beginning of the Church's saving mission in the world when the Apostles added about three thousand souls to the Church through the means of Baptism. (Acts 2:41)

The reason given by the reformers for suppressing the baptismal ceremonies was that, from the early Middle Ages, the number of catechumens baptized at the Pentecost Vigil began to decline. But that was only because the Catholic population increased exponentially worldwide, making it necessary for Baptisms to be administered throughout the year, in addition to the Vigil of Pentecost. The reformers' accusation that the *Hanc*

igitur was a meaningless vestige, no longer relevant for modern times, was without historical or logical basis.

For the true meaning of the Vigil's baptismal ritual was not strictly limited to time or place. In the *Hanc igitur*, the priest includes all who have been baptized in the ceremonies of that day throughout the universal Church, irrespective of whether the Sacrament itself had been administered before a particular Mass. The ritual was also an act of solidarity with the catechumens of the early Church who were baptized on the Vigil of Pentecost by means of the same rites. Thus was affirmed the Catholicity of the Church throughout the world and down the ages.

These points, however, were not addressed by the Commission, whose members were already sharpening their knives for the next round of cuts to the traditional liturgy. But what are the chances of anyone in authority today addressing these issues with a view to rectifying the injustices suffered by Catholics deprived of their rightful heritage?

None whatsoever: for the intention of the reformers was to efface the baptismal content and hence change the nature of the Pentecost Vigil. That they succeeded entirely in doing so is evident from the “new understanding” of the Faith that characterized the *Novus Ordo* liturgy.

In January 1988, the Congregation for Divine Worship issued a Circular Letter which mentioned that the Vigil of Pentecost is a ceremony “**whose character is not baptismal**”. ³⁷⁶ [Emphasis added] One could hardly imagine a more jarring disconnect with Tradition. But the about-face is no longer noticed as an anomaly after over three decades of non-observance of the baptismal ceremonies. We can see now, however, that the destruction of the Pentecost Vigil had all along been part of the ongoing Liturgical Revolution initiated by Pius XII's Commission, for the Preface of the 1988 document specifies the 1956 reforms together with the Constitution on the Liturgy (1963) as its reference points.

The reference to Pius XII's contribution is illuminating: it reveals that he legitimized the initial reform in response to demands aimed, it transpired, at preventing the traditional Vigil from continuing at all.

And in an interesting aside, the Circular Letter admits that the Holy Week reforms were largely a failure insofar as “enthusiasm began to wane” among the faithful who preferred their popular “devotions and pious exercises”. ³⁷⁷ One cannot help noticing that this situation echoes the circumstances in 1956 when the Holy Week reforms failed to attract large

numbers of the faithful, as we have seen in Chapter 8. But the real reason for disaffection with the new rites was the untraditional and worldly nature of the reforms themselves which could not attract and hold the allegiance of most contemporary practising Catholics who naturally drifted away.

With the exception of Christmas and Easter, Vigils were either deleted from the 1969 Calendar or reduced to an optional evening Mass. So much confusion has been generated over this issue – especially as new Vigil Masses have been written and various “options” have been introduced – that the whole concept of a Vigil of preparation eludes most Catholics today.

Abolition of Octaves

If Vigils were treated badly under Pius XII, Octaves fared even worse. In fact, they were specifically mentioned as one of the first items targeted by the 1948 Commission for excision from the liturgy in the interests of “simplification”. [378](#)

Of the 18 Octaves in use in the Tridentine Missal, only 3 – of Christmas, Easter and Pentecost – survived the 1956 reform. The Feasts deprived of their Octaves were:

- Epiphany
- Nativity of St John the Baptist
- Sts Peter & Paul
- St Lawrence
- Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- Nativity of Our Lady
- All Saints
- Immaculate Conception
- St Stephen
- St John the Evangelist

- Holy Innocents
- Solemnity of St Joseph
- Ascension
- Corpus Christi
- Sacred Heart

This number does not include the Octaves for local Feasts such as the dedication of a church or cathedral, for the titular of a church, or for the patron saint of a religious order, diocese or nation, all of which were also abolished by Pius XII.

It is obvious from this list that Octaves were a key mainstay of the Liturgical Year throughout its different Seasons. While Vigils had the function of preparing the faithful for the Church's great festivals and helping them to participate more effectively in them, Octaves functioned by allowing room or breathing space for the "special graces" of each Season to be assimilated and applied to their everyday lives. Without these practical aids to the spiritual life, the Church's Feasts are more likely to be treated as transient occurrences with little expectation of long-term effects.

What reason, then, did Pius XII's Commission give for the demolition of so many pillars of the *lex orandi* whose removal would make the whole structure of the Liturgical Year unsafe and unstable? The *official* reason was the old chestnut of "simplification", to prevent Octaves from overlapping other Feasts. But the Church already had tried and tested methods for dealing with this eventuality, which did not involve abolishing Octaves on such a large scale. [379](#)

The *real* reason, expressed by the Commission members in the *Memoria*, was to have the Liturgy "freed from certain accretions which obscure its beauty and diminish in a certain sense its efficacy". [380](#) That was one way of saying that the growth of Octaves was a useless and unwanted addition and an ugly excrescence on the face of the Roman Rite.

Destruction of the Octave of the Epiphany

What was so unacceptable about the Octave of the Epiphany (which was even older than that of Christmas) that it had to be expunged from the

Church's Calendar in 1956? The answer was not readily apparent to contemporary Catholics who were understandably mystified by its loss.

However, if we look ahead to the 1969 reforms, we can see with hindsight what was missing from the Epiphany Mass of the *Novus Ordo* but had been included in the traditional Feast and Octave. One major omission was the constantly reiterated references to the homage due to the King of Kings by "all the kings of the earth" in the traditional Epiphany Mass *and* its Octave prayers. This reference, taken from Psalm 71:10-11, has also been entirely removed from the *Novus Ordo* Epiphany Mass.

The theme of the extension of Christ's Kingship to the whole world could hardly be allowed to survive in the age of Religious Liberty ushered in by Vatican II. The Octave had to disappear so that its message would not clash with the "recycled" Epiphany Mass which would be specially written in 1969 to reflect the new progressive outlook.

Effects of the reform

The abolition of the Octave of the Epiphany (which, incidentally, before the 1956 reforms, had outranked that of Christmas), ³⁸¹ was not without repercussions. It gave rise to two innovations in the 1962 Missal, albeit tentative ones, but which would reach their full flowering in the *Novus Ordo*.

First, the final day of the Octave, 13th January, was renamed by Pius XII the "Commemoration of the Baptism of the Lord". This was a pure innovation – there had never been a precedent for such a feast Day in the Roman Rite. Any objections to the reform were brushed aside on the irrelevant grounds that the Baptism of Christ was celebrated by Eastern Rite Christians on the Epiphany. Nor was there a longstanding popular devotion to this aspect of Christ's Divinity (as there had been, for example, to the Sacred Heart ³⁸²) to justify this addition. In the Tridentine Missal, the Baptism of Christ in the Jordan was only narrated in the Gospel of the day as a second Manifestation of His Divinity, so as not to detract from the pre-eminence of the first Epiphany which was being celebrated in the Octave.

The significance of this innovation was lost on most Catholics before Vatican II because they could not have realized where it was leading. For, at that time, only the members of the Liturgical Commission and their close associates knew the answer, and they were keeping it a secret.

But the crunch was yet to come. It transpired that Pius XII's initiative was a kite-flying exercise to prepare the faithful for the next stage of the reform. Having made the faithful swallow the new *title*, the reformers invented and served up a new Feast to correspond – the Baptism of the Lord – which entered the Roman Calendar in 1969.

The long-term effect of this reform, incorporated into the 1962 Missal by Pope John XXIII, was to undermine the immemorial custom in the West of thinking of the Feast of the Epiphany *specifically* as the Christ's Manifestation to the Gentiles in the persons of the Magi. The Tridentine Missal commemorates the other two Manifestations – the Baptism of Christ and the Marriage at Cana – in the Gospels of the 13th January and the Second Sunday after the Epiphany respectively. They reflected the themes of illumination (Baptism) and power (to work miracles) contained in the Epiphany Feast.

Only with hindsight can we see the connection between Pius XII's reform and that of Paul VI who extended the Christmas Season to the first Sunday after the Epiphany (the newly minted Baptism of the Lord). By conflating the two Manifestations of Christ (His Birth and Baptism), the reformers obscured the defining characteristic of the Epiphany – Christ manifesting Himself to all people as their Divine King, to Whom all rulers owe subservience – a doctrine utterly abhorrent to the Progressive mindset.

Even a small child can grasp that notion when looking at the crib figures with the Three Kings showing subservience to the Christ Child. Now, as a result of the *Novus Ordo*, most adults know less about the Faith than the children of previous generations.

Secondly, in 1956, the period of the Liturgical Year after 13th January (Pius XII's "Commemoration of the Baptism of the Lord") was renamed "the **time *per annum*** before Septuagesima". Few people at the time would have spotted this time-bomb planted in the 1962 Missal, set to detonate in 1969, or even suspected that this innocuous-sounding change in nomenclature spelt doom for the traditional arrangement of seasons and feasts in the General Roman Calendar. [383](#)

For, the term "time *per annum*" was later adopted in the *Novus Ordo* to designate the revolutionary concept of "Ordinary Time", invented solely to obliterate the "Sundays after the Epiphany", the "Sundays after Pentecost" and the whole Septuagesima Season. And, sure enough, *all* were blown sky-high when the liturgical bomb went off.

20: SHORT-TERM SURVIVAL OF THE OCTAVE OF PENTECOST

Although this extremely ancient Octave, dating back to the 4th century, survived the 1956 reforms, the decision to abolish it had already been made by Pius XII's Commission in February 1950. [384](#)

Of the 3 “experts” consulted by the Commission, Dom Bernard Capelle stated that the Octave should be retained, but he was outnumbered by Frs Jungmann and Righetti who voted to abolish it. In fact, from 1948, when the Liturgical Commission put forward a proposal to “courageously abolish the Octave”, [385](#) its days were numbered, in more ways than one.

It was, therefore, always a “racing certainty” that this would be accomplished, if not under Pius XII, then at the first available opportunity. The Octave was given a stay of execution under Pius XII only because the reformers needed time to compose a new set of texts which would be compatible with the *Novus Ordo* Calendar and liturgy that they were planning to produce a few years later. These texts were meant to accommodate the revolutionary new concept of “Ordinary Time” in the *Novus Ordo* Calendar which starts immediately after Pentecost Sunday. As these were not compatible with the soon to be published 1962 Missal, they would have to wait until the fabrication of the *Novus Ordo* when Paul VI erased the Octave completely.

There was, thus, no time for fond farewells or lingering leave-taking of the traditional feast of Pentecost which marked the birthday of the Church, no time to savour its message or meditate on the Third Person of the Holy Trinity in Whose honour the Octave was instituted.

As with the Vigil, the Octave of Pentecost had been closely connected with that of Easter. Both shared the distinction – unique in the Tridentine Calendar – of being classified as Octaves of **the first rank**. As Dom Guéranger observed: “The mystery of Pentecost holds so important a place in the Christian dispensation, that we cannot be surprised at the Church’s ranking it in her liturgy on an equality with her Paschal solemnity”. [386](#)

Great would have been his shock and dismay had he lived to see the abolition of the Octave, not to mention the Vigil, of Pentecost whose liturgy had entitled it to parity of esteem with the Easter celebrations.

Having been deprived both of its Vigil and Octave, the once mighty feast of Pentecost was suddenly reduced to an ordinary Sunday. It was turned into a stand-alone feast and made to look like a one-day wonder, after which the liturgy was unceremoniously hustled from Red to Green and disconnected from the theme of Pentecost.

Pius XII's Commission had already planned this strategy in 1950, as we have seen in Note 1. The same source reveals that this was exactly the same 2:1 outcome for the proposal to abolish the Octave of the Ascension and replace it with a pre-Pentecost "Novena" (sequence of nine Masses). Interestingly, Dom Capelle stated that "no sufficient reason" was given as to "why this traditional Octave should be changed into a Novena", and that it was "unheard of in any liturgical rites". [387](#)

Wheeling, dealing and stealing

The ethicality of this reform is brought into question when we consider how it was pushed through by Bugnini alone amidst a welter of confusion and without either the informed consent or clear agreement of anyone else. Regarding the suppression of the Octave of Pentecost, Bugnini later admitted that there was much disagreement and shilly-shallying among the *Consilium* members and that *the matter was never fully resolved*:

"Here again there was disagreement. The suppression was accepted with the expectation that the formularies of the Octave would be used during the nine days of preparation for Pentecost. On this point again there were changes of mind, but the decision of the Fathers finally prevailed... [However,] it **subsequently caused confusion and second thoughts**". [388](#) [emphasis added]

No doubt the "second thoughts" came when they realized – too late – that Bugnini's prevarications had made it difficult for them to figure out precisely how they had been deceived into accepting an unequal trade-off between one of the highest-ranking Octaves and a concocted "novena" of preparation for Pentecost.

As for the "confusion", this spilled over into the liturgical and doctrinal areas. When in 1969 the Octave of Pentecost was abolished and transmuted into a pre-Pentecost week of preparation, the days that ran from Ascension Thursday to the Vigil of Pentecost (known as "Ascensiontide") were supplanted by the new on-the-spot texts specially created by the *Consilium*.

This meant, therefore, that the faithful were deprived of the opportunities to celebrate the mystery of the Ascension that Catholics had been doing for centuries throughout all the days of Ascensiontide.

From this diminution of the honour and attention traditionally lavished on the Ascension, there was bound to follow a lessening of regard for and weakening of faith in its mystery.

Anomaly of “Ascension Sunday”

In accordance with both Scripture and Tradition, the feast of the Ascension has been celebrated 40 days after Easter, always falling on a Thursday, in both Eastern and Western Christianity since the 4th century. But so low had attendance fallen at the Mass of the Ascension after Vatican II that many bishops transferred the feast day to a Sunday, thus contributing to the utter bewilderment of the faithful caused by the plethora of revolutionary reforms introduced since the time of Pius XII.

Not only did the abolition of the Pentecost Octave cause a major disruption to the settled arrangement of feasts and ferias, and to the thought processes that accompanied them, but it was entirely unnecessary. It was not as if Ascensiontide had not been a period of expectation of the coming of the Holy Spirit. In the Epistle of the Sunday within the Octave of the Ascension (1 Peter IV. 7-11), for example, St Peter prescribes the virtues we need – devotion to prayer, “constant mutual charity”, good use of God’s gifts, faithful performance of our duties of state – to render us less unworthy to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

And in the Gospel (John 15, 26-27), Our Lord promises to send the Paraclete on the Apostles. And the whole liturgy of the feria days, plus that of the Friday after the Octave, re-echoed the Mass of the Ascension, and was redolent with a spirit of expectation.

A bureaucratic boondoggle

So there is no basis for Bugnini’s claim that the new pre-Pentecost liturgy was an adequate compensation for the loss of the Octave of Pentecost (not to mention that of the Ascension). This is yet another example of the numerous bureaucratic boondoggles inflicted on the Church which have fractured the liturgy, deprived the faithful of their spiritual patrimony and caused widespread confusion.

Nor were the newly fabricated texts suitable. They were merely cobbled together with liberal use of scissors and paste pot by a group of “experts” on the *Consilium* who made a kind of pastiche of Latin phrases and foisted them on the faithful.

Bugnini, of course, always had a pat answer to any objection or complaint about the Commission’s policies:

“Signs and rites are likely to become encrusted by time, that is, to grow old and outmoded. They may therefore need to be revised and updated, so that the expression of the Church’s worship may reflect the perennial youthfulness of the Church itself. This kind of change is vitally necessary for a living organism...tradition consists not in restoring what others have done, but in rediscovering the spirit that brought those things into existence”. [389](#)

Distinctive features of the Pentecost Octave

Let us ponder the artistry and aesthetic beauty of this part of our spiritual patrimony which Bugnini and his fellow members on Pius XII’s Liturgical Commission had been planning to destroy from 1948.

Each Mass of the Octave had its own special character, celebrating one of the Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost in ascending order, to illustrate the successive steps of the soul towards increased likeness to Christ. [390](#) As Dom Guéranger explained, these were:

- Sunday: Fear of the Lord;
- Monday: Godliness (Piety);
- Tuesday: Knowledge;
- Wednesday: Fortitude;
- Thursday: Counsel;
- Friday: Understanding;
- Saturday: Wisdom.

Dom Guéranger also explained the logic of the order: the first five gifts are the graces needed for the active life of the faithful in the world; the rest relate to the contemplative life and our mystical union with Christ.

The question for us today is: Why abolish the extension of Pentecost, a Feast in which, as Pope St Leo the Great taught, the Holy Ghost dispenses His Gifts “*ditior largitate*” (in more generous measure)? [391](#)

At each Mass the *Veni Sancte Spiritus* with its Alleluia was sung or recited to reinforce the “outpouring of the Holy Ghost” at Pentecost. Formerly known as the “Golden Sequence”, it was widely appreciated as a masterpiece of liturgical poetry, yet its flowing rhythms, its clarity and simplicity made it appeal to the masses.

Another notable feature of the Octave was its three Ember Days (Wednesday, Friday and Saturday) with fasting and partial abstinence – an obvious no-no for the Liturgical Commission which had just abolished Septuagesima and tried, unsuccessfully, to do the same with Ash Wednesday. [392](#)

What distinguished these Ember Days from all the others in the Liturgical Year was their position within a season of jubilation, which made them a bitter-sweet time, partaking of both fasting and feasting.

A purely subjective reform

Even the progressive theologian, Fr Louis Bouyer, a key player in the Liturgical Movement, expressed his shock and horror at this reform which he considered both senseless and arbitrary. He delivered this broadside against his fellow progressivists:

“I prefer to say nothing, or virtually nothing, of the new Calendar, the handiwork of a trio of maniacs who suppressed, *with no good reason*, Septuagesima and the Octave of Pentecost and who scattered three quarters of the Saints who knows where, *all based on notions of their own!*” [393](#)
[emphases added]

What exactly were these “notions of their own”? A brief examination of the rationale for the abolition of the Pentecost Octave will show that it was carried out in flagrant repudiation of the principles of liturgical development. For, as we shall see, Bugnini failed to apply any standards of rational evaluation of the existing tradition.

“50 days and no more”

The rationale for the abolition of the Octave rests on the Commission’s iron-clad theory that the 50 days between Easter and Pentecost should be a hermetically sealed unit, and that to extend the period by another few days is tantamount to destroying the unity of the Easter Season:

“The Easter season lasts fifty days, beginning with the Easter Vigil and ending with Pentecost Sunday. This is attested by the ancient and universal tradition of the Church, which has always celebrated the seven weeks of Easter as though they were a single day that ends with the feast of Pentecost. For this reason, the octave of Pentecost, which was added to the fifty days of Easter in the sixth century, has been abolished”. [394](#)

This, incidentally, was the same type of specious argument Bugnini used in order to justify the abolition of the Septuagesima Season which allegedly overstepped the 40 days of Lent:

“[T]here should be a simplification. It was not possible to restore Lent to its full importance without sacrificing Septuagesima, which is an extension of Lent”. [395](#)

But the premise in both cases is logically irrelevant to the conclusion, having no bearing whatsoever on whether the Octave of Pentecost or Septuagesima Sunday should be *abolished*.

The “50-days-only” idea was simply invented out of thin air. There is simply not enough solid evidence about the Western rites of the first centuries to state with certainty that there were never any days of extended festivities after Pentecost. [396](#) And even if there were none, it would not entitle the reformers to wipe out about 1,500 years of ancient and universal tradition and throw the Octave of Pentecost into the flames.

However, the General Norms of the 1969 Calendar issued by the Congregation of Rites and signed by its Secretary, the future Cardinal Antonelli, tried to justify the abolition of the Pentecost Octave by some specious reasoning. It stated that St Athanasius described the 50 days between Easter and Pentecost to be celebrated “as one feast day, indeed as one ‘great Sunday’”, [397](#) and used the fact that St Athanasius did not mention any extra days of festivities after Pentecost to eliminate the Octave.

It hardly needs to be pointed out that this argument was a *non sequitur* and that, far from supporting the conclusion that the Octave should be abolished, would seem, on the contrary, to provide grounds for its retention. For all the major feasts of the Temporal Cycle were preceded by “seasons” which were, in mystical terms, regarded as a single “day” and followed by an Octave in order to reinforce and prolong their supernatural effects.

The decision to abolish the Pentecost Octave suggests an attempt by the reformers to project their own fancies on to St Athanasius, and that we are dealing with a tendentious interpretation of his writings to alter the Calendar in his name. Absurdly, the Bishop of Alexandria is now regarded as the champion of an Octave-less Pentecost, even though he never opposed the concept of an extended Feast.

Accusations rain like bullets

The reformers complained that the Octave was defective because its last day was missing, overlapping with Trinity Sunday. ³⁹⁸ But according to the Roman Missal, the Octave of Pentecost, like that of Easter, starts on the Vigil and ends on the following Saturday. ³⁹⁹

Another spurious claim was that the Octave contained a self-contradictory feature: fasting and feasting in a week of joyous celebration. But the purpose of fasting during the Pentecost Ember Days was not penitential. That is why the liturgical vestments were red rather than purple, while the folded chasubles – the quintessential garment of priestly penitence – were not used. Here, fasting had a different purpose. As Pope Leo the Great explained, it was meant as a spiritual limbering up exercise to imitate the Apostles who, having been sent by the Spirit, prepared themselves with “holy fasts” for their missionary service in the world. ⁴⁰⁰

Not only was the Pentecost Octave *not* a diminution of Easter, as the reformers charged, but it was eminently fitting as a vehicle of greater honour to the Holy Spirit, which was the entire purpose of the Pentecost Octave. How could the same Spirit be pleased with the abolition of a liturgy that owed its inspiration to Himself *ad majorem Gloria Dei*?

21. CREEPING ASCENDANCY OF THE LAITY

The ravaging of the liturgical patrimony of the Roman Rite under Pius XII was not confined to the reform of Holy Week but, as the 1948 Commission had planned, [401](#) extended into other areas of the liturgy as well.

Anyone who sets out to consider the reforms of Pius XII in their historical detail cannot fail to notice the sequence of events linking them to the *Novus Ordo*.

Fading relevance of the priest in the changing structure of Holy Week

It was a startling innovation when the 1951 *Ordo* instructed the priest to **sit and listen** to the reading of the Prophecies at the Easter Vigil rather than perform the traditional role of reciting them himself at the altar while they were being chanted by other ministers. This was, initially, only optional and *ad experimentum*.

But the most potent blow was struck by the new ruling in the 1956 *Ordo*, issued by the Holy See on the Pope's authority, extending the suppression of the priest's role to all the scriptural readings during the solemn celebrations of Holy Week. [402](#) This meant that no priest of the Roman Rite could perform, as celebrant, his centuries-old obligation of reading the Lessons, Epistle or Gospel (the Passion) during Holy Week when there were other ministers available to undertake the task.

The duplication of Scripture readings – read quietly by the celebrant while chanted simultaneously by other ministers – had been denounced by Dom Beauduin as “a truly regrettable anomaly”. [403](#) It was, and still is, regarded among Progressives with horror as at best a “useless repetition” and, at worst “illogical”.

But that is because their *sensus catholicus* has been negatively influenced by the liturgical reforms insofar as they no longer understand the fundamental doctrinal principle underlying the custom of “duplication” which involves the nature and purpose of the biblical readings in the liturgy.

A forgotten reminder

Before 1956, the obligation for the celebrant to read the Scriptures in the liturgy was a symbolic reminder that he was not (as commonly thought today) conducting a Bible reading session for the instruction of the faithful. He wore a chasuble (discarded in the reformed rite) because the biblical readings, including the Easter Vigil Prophecies, were a part of the Mass of which he was the celebrant.

His proximity to the altar was an outward sign that the words he was reading came from the Word, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, Who is made present on the altar at the Consecration. The point of the symbolism was, therefore, to visually reinforce the correlation between Scripture and the Eucharist, and, crucially, the priest's interconnecting role in both.

As such a principle could only make sense in a Catholic liturgy, why did Pope Pius XII suppress this hallowed custom in Holy Week?

For an answer, we need look no further than the demands of the Liturgical Movement to foster a more “communitarian” approach to the liturgy in which all present are considered to be celebrants. A consistent theme at all the national and international Liturgical Congresses of the 1950s, from Maria Laach to Assisi, was that the first part of the Mass should be conducted *in choro* i.e. with the priest *away* from the altar, and that he should not “monopolize” all the readings.

A new liturgical principle established

Where this reform was heading – towards the “communitarian” concept of the liturgy enshrined in the *Novus Ordo* – is now clear with the benefit of hindsight. In fact, Fr Carlo Braga CM, an early collaborator with Pius XII's Liturgical Commission who acted as Bugnini's right-hand man from the 1950s, [404](#) revealed the Liturgical Movement's aim to make all the faithful become “true actors in the celebration”. [405](#)

Pius XII's 1956 legislation to deprive the priest of his traditional role and re-allocate it to other ministers for the Holy Week ceremonies may seem of little significance in the wider scheme of things. But to dismiss that reform as unworthy of concern is to overlook the elephant in the sanctuary.

That this reform was the start of a systematic encroachment of the priest's ministerial role in the liturgy, and was accompanied by a steady escalation of lay “active participation”, is evident from what it brought in its train. For

this deviation from a 1000-year-old tradition established a new principle that would receive its ultimate affirmation in the adoption of a Protestant-style “Liturgy of the Word” in the *Novus Ordo*. Here, the priest is permanently detached from the altar in the first part of the Mass, while the readings are done at a lectern in the vernacular, preferentially by *anyone* except the celebrating priest.

Almost immediately after the 1956 Holy Week changes, a chain of reforms was paraded out in quick succession, each one containing a revolutionary breach with tradition, and each decreasing the role of the celebrant while greatly promoting the “active participation” of the laity.

Pius XII - *De musica sacra* 1958 – Instruction on Sacred Music

The Instruction was touted as “the last act of the great Pope of the Liturgy on behalf of the Liturgical Movement”. [406](#) This description by one of the key proponents of 20th century liturgical reform was not just an example of empty rodomontade or a propaganda exercise. Pius XII’s document was, in fact, foundational for the creation of the *Novus Ordo* in ways that will be analysed below.

For the first time in the history of the Church, the lay faithful were given, by official decree, a direct and active role in the performance of the liturgy. The following references from *De musica sacra* show that members of the congregation could henceforth, “by right”, perform the following:

AT SOLEMN (SUNG) MASS:

- **§25a: Sing the liturgical responses to the priest.**
This was only the lowest of several graded steps of increasing complexity for the “active participation” of the congregation;
- **§25b: Sing the parts of the Ordinary: Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus-Benedictus, Agnus Dei.**
But Pope Pius X had taught that these were the province of the clergy and the choir. Contrary to majority opinion, he had given no directives for “congregational singing” of liturgical texts;
- **§25c: Sing some of the Propers of the Mass.**

This was an astoundingly radical innovation. Before Pius XII, there is no authorized precedent for congregational singing of the Propers. These had been sung by specially trained choirs since the creation of the Roman Mass Propers in the 7th century.

- **§13b and c: Sing liturgical texts in the vernacular with special permission.**

Pius XII had already conceded this to the German bishops in 1943. ⁴⁰⁷ This practice of replacing Gregorian Chant and Polyphony with vernacular hymns, strictly forbidden at Solemn Mass, soon became widespread as more bishops requested the same permission. It would inevitably undermine the preservation of the Church's treasury of Sacred Music;

- **§14a: Add some popular vernacular hymns with permission from the local Bishop.**

This was only the tip of a very large iceberg. For, as Bugnini revealed, the original intention was that "the principle of songs in the vernacular is to be extended to the entire Church in the reformed Roman Missal". ⁴⁰⁸ Already in 1958, permission was available for the faithful to sing their favourite number in the vernacular during solemn Mass.

- **§ 27c: Recite the three-fold *Domine, non sum dignus* together with the priest before receiving Communion;**

- **§96: A Commentator (who may be a layman) could exercise a liturgical ministry by standing in front of the congregation and audibly explaining the different parts of the Mass.**

Apart from causing a distraction to contemplative prayer, the potential of a running commentary for indoctrinating the faithful with new "perspectives" on the Mass is obvious;

- **§96a: Women were accorded the right to "lead the song and prayers of the faithful".**

This had always been the established practice in Protestant liturgies;

- **§100: Women and girls were permitted to join "mixed" choirs or form their own all-female choir to sing the liturgy.**

Yet Pius X had authoritatively stated the traditional teaching that women cannot be admitted to liturgical choirs. ⁴⁰⁹

AT LOW MASS:

- **§31a and b: Make the liturgical responses to the prayers of the priest, "thus holding a sort of dialogue with him".**

This included all the responses said by the server, including the *Confiteor*;

- **§31c: Say aloud with the priest all the parts of the Ordinary as at Sung Mass noted above.**

Nothing could be more calculated to destroy the atmosphere of the “Quiet Mass” than an incessant stream of audible responses from the congregation.

- **§31d: Recite together with the priest the parts of the Propers: Introit, Gradual, Offertory, Communion.**

- **§32: Recite the *Pater Noster*, including the Amen, in unison with the priest.**

This innovation was first officially introduced in the 1956 Good Friday reforms. The communal recitation of this prayer is found in Protestant traditions. In the traditional Roman Rite, it had always been a sacerdotal prayer, in which only the last verse was said by the server or sung by the choir.

- **§31b: Recite the triple *Domine non sum dignus* together with the priest before receiving Communion.**

At this particular point of the Mass, traditionally reserved for quiet reflection on one’s own unworthiness, the faithful were encouraged, as it were, to wear their heart on their sleeve and “exteriorize” the dispositions of their soul for all to hear.

- **§14b: Sing popular hymns or say aloud some prayers in the vernacular.**

Bishops in some areas had for decades been allowing the faithful to sing vernacular hymns during Low Mass, and this practice was officially endorsed for the whole Church. Fr Pius Parsch had devised the *Betsingmesse* (“Pray-Sing-Mass”) with vernacular responses in the 1920s which rapidly spread throughout the German-speaking lands and became the model for liturgical reformers in other countries.

From 1943-46, Bugnini conducted experiments in the “Dialogue Mass” in Rome, in which he made the congregation say aloud Italian paraphrases, which he himself had composed, of the Mass texts. ⁴¹⁰ Thus, §14b endorsed the unauthorized Bugnini experiment and rewarded the disobedience of other innovators who had, on their own initiative, been promoting vernacular prayers in the Mass.

- **§14c: A Lector could read the Epistle and Gospel to the faithful in the vernacular while the priest was reading them in Latin.**

The point of the exercise was for the Lector (who could be a layman) to effectively “voice-over” the priest. This practice had already been popularized by Fr Parsch’s *Betsingmesse*. A future step would be to have vernacular-only readings, for which the liturgical reformers had long been clamouring.

Unlike the Holy Week changes, these reforms were only permissive rather than prescriptive, which explains why users of the 1962 Missal do not always follow them. Yet their effect was unfavourable to Tradition.

According to the Congregation of Rites, the 1958 Instruction was approved by Pius XII “*speciali modo*”, indicating his personal involvement in the preparation of these revolutionary reforms. Henceforth, traditionally-minded priests were placed on the back foot, as it were, with the onus on

them to provide a rationale for their continued use of the Church's traditions.

John XXIII – *Rubricarum instructum* 1960 – New Code of Rubrics

Whereas the “sit-and-listen” ruling for the celebrant previously applied only to the Scripture readings in the 1956 Holy Week services, this was extended to all Sung Masses from January 1961, when the New Rubrics came into effect. Here it was stipulated that “In Sung Masses, all that the deacon, or subdeacon, or lector sing or read by virtue of their office is omitted by the celebrant”. (§§ 473 and 513 f)

Paul VI - *Inter Oecumenici* 1964 – Instruction on the Implementation of the Constitution on the Liturgy

Archbishop Piero Marini, who had worked under Bugnini in the secretariat of the *Consilium* (the Commission that designed the *Novus Ordo*), described this Instruction as “a victory for the *Consilium*'s approach to liturgical reform”. [411](#) It is not difficult to see why.

This document takes John XXIII's ruling a step further. Even in non-solemn Masses, a “reader or the server may read the Lessons and Epistles with the intervening chants” while the priest “sits and listens”. (§50) It tightened the reformers' grip on the priest by imposing a sort of ecclesiastical “gagging order” on his recitation of certain prayers in the Mass:

“The parts belonging to the choir and to the people [*Partes quae ad scholam et ad populum spectant*] and sung or recited by them are not said privately by the celebrant”. (§32)

In this reform, which could be aptly termed “Operation Switcheroo”, the celebrant becomes the “mute spectator” while the people become directly responsible for proclaiming parts of the Mass that had traditionally been invested in the celebrant.

However, as a sort of consolation prize, *Inter Oecumenici* condescendingly granted that “The celebrant may sing or recite the parts of the Ordinary

together with the congregation or choir” (§48b), i.e. as if he were an ordinary member of the assembly.

In the Instruction *De musica sacra* (1958), the “community Mass” was, to the delight of the reformers, given explicit approval by the Pope, down to the finest detail of lay “active participation”. The Instruction laid the foundation for the future creation of the *Novus Ordo* insofar as it gave the laity an integral role in the enactment of the Mass:

§21: “Everything which the liturgical books prescribe to be sung, either by the priest and his ministers, or by the choir **or congregation**, forms an **integral** part of the sacred liturgy”. [emphasis added]

For something to be an integral part of the liturgy, it must be an intrinsic element of those activities of which the liturgy is composed, necessary for its completeness, and one which the principal actor (the priest) cannot properly function without.

Of course, §21 meant that the prescribed texts must be sung in their entirety. Nevertheless, the impression is conveyed, through elliptical wording, that when the laity sings the liturgical texts, their “active participation” is as integral to the liturgy as the singing of the priest, his ministers and the choir. But that is a Protestant, not a Catholic, viewpoint: it was Luther who made the congregation and the choir equal in importance and held that the singing of the congregation was no less integral to the service.

If we wish to know the authentic Catholic position which guided the Church throughout history, it was expressed by Pope Pius X:

“[T]he Church is inherently (“*vi et natura sua*”) an *unequal* society, that is, a society comprising two categories of persons, the Pastors and the flock, those who occupy a rank in the different degrees of the hierarchy and the multitude of the faithful”. ⁴¹² [emphasis in the original]

In the context of this two-tier system, it is of the greatest significance that the choir was traditionally considered a class apart from the congregation because its function of singing the liturgical texts belongs to the clergy. It follows, therefore, that choir members – even though they may be laymen – exercise “a real liturgical office”, for which purpose it was laid down that they should “wear the ecclesiastical habit and surplice”. ⁴¹³

As for the other category of persons, the “multitude of the faithful”, no specific directives were given to them by Pius X, from which we can infer

that they were under no obligation to sing the liturgical texts. This is indisputably clear in his explanation that, apart from the singing of the “celebrant at the altar and the ministers”, “**all the rest of the liturgical chant** belongs to the choir”. ⁴¹⁴ [emphasis added]

The ordinary faithful were, therefore, by definition *not* included among the singers performing liturgical functions. So there are no grounds for believing that Pius X had a congregational rendition in mind when he issued his *motu proprio* on Sacred Music in 1903.

We must briefly mention the popular reports of a letter, bandied around the internet, allegedly written by Pius X, before he became Pope, to Bishop Callegari of Padua. In it, he is quoted as favouring congregational singing in the liturgy even above polyphony. But no archival source is given with which to verify the authenticity of the letter.

Furthermore, there are several different published versions of the letter, each purporting to be the original text, and these conflicting pieces of evidence are put forward as “proof” that Pius X recommended congregational singing at Mass. Thus, a false “authority” is created to support an ideological position.

Further research reveals that mention of the letter first crops up in the works of Pius X’s early biographers who each added their own creative interpretation to support their subjective idea of what they would have liked the Pope to say. While the term “creative non-fiction” is used today to describe imaginative reconstructions of people’s lives, literary fabrications are as old as the written word. The result is that the final telling is, as in the children’s game of Chinese Whispers, a complete distortion.

Contrast with Pius XII

Very different was the approach of Pius XII under the influence of the Liturgical Movement. He not only exhorted communal singing of the Mass, but issued a positive mandate for its accomplishment:

“Every effort must be made that all the faithful throughout the world learn to sing these parts [of the Mass]”. (*De musica sacra* §25 a and b)

There is nothing comparable in any of the documents signed personally by Pius X, either before or during his papacy. He had always promoted the formation of male-voice choirs, ⁴¹⁵ particularly among seminarians, and the instructions he issued in his *motu proprio* for training in Gregorian Chant

were directed exclusively to clergy, seminarians and choirs. The only “active participation” he promoted for the laity was in the temporal sphere which he instructed them to infuse with Christian principles.

As we have seen, mandatory rubrics for lay activism in the liturgy were an invention of Pius XII, and first appeared in the 1956 *Ordo* for Holy Week. This innovation was later developed in Vatican II’s Constitution on the Liturgy which stipulated that when the liturgical books were revised, they “must carefully attend to the provision of rubrics also for the people’s parts”. (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* §31)

The pre-eminent assembly displaces the celebrating priest

When the General Instruction of the *Novus Ordo* was produced in 1969, Cardinal Ottaviani noted its “obsessive references to the communal character of the Mass”, adding that “the role attributed to the faithful is autonomous, absolute – and hence completely false”.

The blame for this deviation from Tradition can be laid at the door of the “new theology” espoused by the Liturgical Movement – and later adopted by Vatican II – which rejected the clearly defined two-tiered clergy-laity paradigm and redefined the Constitution of the Church as a homogeneous “communion” of all the faithful.

The liturgical innovators reduced the priest to the same level as the laity on the basis of their “common priesthood”, the only discernible difference being the functions allocated to them in the liturgy. Thus, the sacramental priesthood was dissolved into Luther’s “universal priesthood of all believers”.

From this fundamental error which disguises the difference in essence between the baptized faithful and the ordained priesthood came the novel concept that the congregation had both the **right and duty** to sing or recite liturgical texts formerly reserved to the clergy.

How did such a startling distortion of the clergy-laity distinction, reminiscent of Luther’s abolition of the priesthood, begin to take hold in the Church?

Pius XII incubated the early stages of the process by conceding many of the *desiderata* of the reformers in the realm of “active participation” of the laity. If, as *De musica sacra* §21 states, everyone’s singing of the liturgical

texts is integral to the liturgy, there is basically only one celebrant: the assembly. This is the “new theology” of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (§1188) which states that: “In a liturgical celebration, the whole assembly is *leitourgos* [the celebrant]”.

And all who exercise the role of singer – celebrant, clergy, choir, soloist, the congregation – do so as members of the assembly. The song of the assembly becomes *ipso facto* more important than the singing of any individual, including the priest celebrant.

However, few today perceive the ideological nature of the engine pulling the Liturgical Movement’s train, or realize the deeper and more subversive issue for the Church – the diminution of the celebrant’s role in the Mass and the ease with which lay people could take over the ministry of priests. For, what was being impugned by the reformers from Beauduin to Vatican II was **the right of the clergy** to sing or say Mass – which is their divinely appointed role – without the people muscling in on the liturgical action.

The inevitable consequence of the new liturgical theology was the declericalization of the liturgy to focus on the primacy of the assembly.

The charge of “clericalism”

From the beginning of the 20th century, the Catholic priest had become the target of bitter denunciation – not just by Protestants and atheists as one would expect – but by a growing army of Catholic liturgists, virtually all of whom were fellow priests, within the ranks of the Liturgical Movement.

The basic charge concerned the role of the celebrant and his right to perform the whole of the Mass himself. So priests who had been doing precisely that – and their numbers were legion throughout centuries of the Church’s history – were accused by 20th century reformers of monopolizing the liturgy and were declared guilty of “clericalism”.

They further charged that since the early Middle Ages the celebrant’s role had grown so overweening that it unjustly deprived the other baptized members of the Church of full *active* participation in the liturgy.

Many in the Liturgical Movement have spoken of “closing the gap between the priest and the laity” with the aim of making the whole assembly responsible for co-performing the liturgy – a camouflage for doctrinal confusion and a liturgical free-for-all.

The struggle to wrest “ownership” from “clerical elites”

Dom Lambert Beauduin, Pius Parsch and Josef Jungmann were among the earliest reformers to object that the liturgy had become the exclusive preserve of the clergy. ⁴¹⁶ Fr Jungmann saw the situation in terms of class structures: “The social position of the clergy – who were far and wide the governing class in society and practically alone in possession of a higher education – contributed no little to estranging them, lifting them above the people”. ⁴¹⁷ He opined that the Roman rite was “no longer a Liturgy of the faithful” but only “a rich, empty façade”. ⁴¹⁸

In 1922, as part of this laity-clergy power struggle, an anonymous priest made a plea to his fellow clergy in the *American Ecclesiastical Review* to follow the slogan “The Liturgy for the People!” He called for a “concerted movement” to ensure the “people’s vocal prayer” in the liturgy and root out “the mania for new devotions” to which they were addicted. ⁴¹⁹

No sooner had Pius XII issued his 1958 Instruction on Sacred Music than Mgr J. B. O’Connell published his commentary in which one can sense the animosity to Catholic Tradition bubbling just beneath the surface:

“The priest celebrated ‘his’ Mass at the altar, taking no account of anyone except the server; and the people ‘heard’ their Mass, while, for the most part, saying their private prayers, or just saying and doing nothing at all, being physically present with the minimum of attention and intention demanded by the moral theologians to fulfil the obligation of ‘hearing Mass’”. ⁴²⁰

It is significant that this kind of obloquy, aimed at discrediting Tradition, was endemic only in progressive circles, among those who despised the traditional Mass and wanted to replace it by something of their own creation.

While these progressive liturgical leaders and their followers were busily vilifying the traditional role of the priest and deriding it as a form of “clericalism”, the Liturgical Movement succeeded in having the ear of the Popes from Pius XI onwards. It took upon itself the mission to “restore” to the faithful a sense of “ownership” of the liturgical action, claiming that they had been deprived of it for centuries by a dominating clergy.

It is well known which historical figure promoted the idea that “ownership” was “in the hands of the few” as a catalyst for revolution. But Marx’s influence was not limited to the political sphere.

One of its entry points into the Church was via the Liturgical Movement. ⁴²¹ There it spread like a parasitic infection, whipping up resentment against the privileges of the clergy in the liturgy, and inciting the laity to ever more demands for “active participation”, “equality” and “access”.

Henceforth the beleaguered clergy would have to defend their patch against an advancing tide of hostility from progressive reformers in the Liturgical Movement.

Policy over principle

With Pius XII we can see the development of a new, liberal policy towards liturgical reform, the single most important element of which was to promote “active participation” of the people. The flip side of this policy, however, was to introduce legislation which effectively discriminated against the recipients of Holy Orders, making it easier for the non-ordained to usurp clerical roles.

These twin objectives were, as we have seen, apparent in the rubrics of the new Order of Holy Week (1956) and the Instruction on Sacred Music (1958) which made the clergy share with the congregation their privileged worship space, liturgical roles and even their responsibility for performing the liturgy.

Here we can see the flaw in the reformers’ argument which posits a fundamental equality between clergy and laity in the liturgy by virtue of their common Baptism. They conclude from this premise that no one is superior or inferior to anyone else in the liturgy, and that any perceived differences arise purely from the variety of functions allocated to each of the participants in the assembly.

“Preferential option for the laity”

This was, at root, the basis of the “horizontalism” that characterizes *Novus Ordo* liturgies. Progressive reformers give no consideration to the Sacrament of Ordination by which the priest is raised ontologically to a *higher* level than the recipients of Baptism alone, enabling him to

accomplish *supernatural acts in persona Christi* which are denied to laymen. Although this was the perennial teaching of the Church, it was ignored by the liturgical reformers who had an ideological interest in tarring the Church with the dreaded label of “clericalism”. Indeed, to subscribe to the view of the Catholic priesthood as nobler and loftier is to invite howls of protest from the progressivists as a violation of the rights of the laity to full “active participation” in the liturgy.

So, a whole range of coercive measures were put in place, designed to protect the laity from the alleged harm inflicted on them by so-called “clericalism” and prevent the priest celebrant in particular from supposedly “lording it” over the rest of the assembly. This image goes hand in hand with the reformers’ desire to uproot and destroy the liturgy that had been handed down throughout the centuries.

We have seen enough evidence to know that the new legislation was grounded in the prejudice of reformers who wanted to introduce an idea that would revolutionize the whole of the Church’s worship – that the congregation at large had the right and duty to co-perform the liturgy with the priest.

The priest, the real target

Starting on a restricted scale in Holy Week under Pope Pius XII, and continuing under his successors, increasingly stringent legislation was enacted to *prevent* the priest celebrant from performing many of his traditional liturgical roles. These reflected the true identity of the priest as an *alter Christus* and were rooted in the history, language, texts, musical heritage and culture of the Roman Rite.

As preventive legislation is only used with the intention of eliminating threats to the common good – as in anti-terrorism strategies, pest control or the curtailing of infections etc. – we may reasonably infer that the traditional priesthood was similarly viewed as a danger to the success of the “new liturgical theology”. So it too had to be eliminated along with the traditional structures that had protected the priesthood from the incursions of Protestantism and secularism.

It is no coincidence that the era which comes closest to the Liturgical Movement’s ideal liturgy is the Protestant Reformation. Nor is it surprising that the priest of the *Novus Ordo* ended up losing his privileged status in the liturgy and becoming a mere Presider over the assembly’s activities. Small

wonder, then, that the post-Vatican II Church is suffering from a crisis of identity among priests, and seminaries are being closed down in great number.

The decline of the priesthood has already helped undermine and enfeeble the Church's mission of salvation in the world, leaving it vulnerable to the encroachments of secular ideologies. And the more the true Mass and priesthood have been eroded, the more the Church has allowed itself to become entangled in a web of ecumenism, yielding increasing ground to other faiths and to secular ideologies which threaten to destroy the Church's historic identity. But where is the preventive legislation against that?

22. WHO ARE THE “TRUE ACTORS” ⁴²² **IN THE LITURGY?**

Before the Liturgical Movement, the answer was dazzlingly clear from the way Mass was performed by the priest with the assistance of his ministers at the altar, while the congregation, suitably segregated from the sanctuary, participated spiritually in prayerful silence. But the liturgical reformers, who assiduously promoted the notion that the whole assembly performs the liturgy, have used this falsity – borrowed from Protestantism – to impugn the special status that is essential to protect the integrity of the ordained priesthood.

To bring these two positions – Catholic and Protestant – into sharper focus, it will be illuminating to juxtapose two commentaries on lay participation, the first written before the start of the Liturgical Movement by the English Redemptorist, Fr Thomas Edward Bridgett, ⁴²³ who described the Mass as essentially a Divine action, and the second by a post-Vatican II priest who presented it as the work of the people.

First, Fr Bridgett's explanation:

“Suppose a ship, filled with a mixed crew of French, Spanish, and Portuguese, is being wrecked on the coast of England. A crowd is assembled on the cliff, watching with intense earnestness the efforts being made by the captain and crew on the one hand, and by lifeboats from the coast on the other, to save the lives of the passengers. A great act is being

performed, in which all are taking part, some as immediate actors, others as eager assistants.

...It is a common act at which they assist; it is accompanied by the prayers of all; but they are not common prayers, in the sense of all joining either vocally or mentally in the same form of words". [424](#)
[emphasis added]

We have to admire the use of this memorable analogy between the action of the Mass and the life-saving work of a rescue operation, insofar as it illustrates who the “true actors” really are.

The captain of the ship is obviously meant to evoke the priest, for on his shoulders alone devolves the whole responsibility for the Mass, while the assisting crew and lifeboat operators represent his ministers in the sanctuary. The people on the shore, **powerless to intervene in the action**, represent the congregation in the pews who have no active role in the Mass because they lack the power to re-enact the Holy Sacrifice or officiate at its ceremonies. Nevertheless, they participate spiritually by offering their own heartfelt prayers without, however, any obligation to follow the priest’s prayers either silently or audibly, or to engage in vocal dialogue with him.

As Fr Bridgett explained:

“To join in this act of sacrifice, and to participate in its effects, it is not necessary to follow the priest or to use the words he uses. Every Catholic knows what the priest is doing, though he may not know or understand what he is saying, and is consequently able to follow with his devotions every portion of the Holy Sacrifice. Hence a wonderful union of sacrificial, of congregational, and of individual devotion”.

Of course, there was no need to spell any of this out to Catholics of the 19th century. Fr Bridgett was writing in defence of the Mass against the prejudices of contemporary Protestants who, ironically, were making the same gibes against Catholic worship as the reformers of the 20th century would do. He was addressing the Protestant charges of “clericalism” – that the people were “excluded” from participation in the proceedings because their rightful roles were usurped by the priest; that they were prevented from understanding what was going on by the “language barrier”, and so on and ridiculously on.

What was Vatican II's response to this "wonderful union of sacrificial, of congregational, and of individual devotion"? Its Liturgical Constitution set out to denounce it, in carefully coded terms, as a recipe for alienating the faithful and introduce, instead, liturgical reforms to "rectify" the problem through "active participation". This "solution" (to a problem, let us remember, that never existed) was presented as if it were an article of faith and the highest state of grace to which the faithful could attain. One day, the Church will have to renounce the fiction that "active participation" was a necessity for the faithful to draw spiritual graces from the liturgy. But that is unlikely to happen until enough Church leaders begin to realize the nature of the mistaken notion about lay participation that has been circulating as the truth.

"Active participation" leads to a misunderstanding of the ordained priesthood

For our second commentary on lay participation in the Mass, we will fast forward to the post-Vatican II period when the reformers were given a free pass to recreate the liturgy in their own ideological image. Fr. Robert Duggan comments on the role of the faithful at the Mass:

"It is they – just as much as the presider – who must offer the great sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God; it is they – just as much as the presider – who carry responsibility to say the prayers and sing the songs prescribed for them in the ritual texts; it is they – just as much as the presider – who must be channels of the Spirit's consecratory power, allowing the gift of themselves to be transformed as surely as the gifts of bread and wine are changed into Christ's body and blood". [425](#)

It is obvious that the two ways of understanding the liturgy are poles apart, and even stand in opposition to each other. The *Novus Ordo* Mass was conceived by the reformers as the "work of the people", a community act in which all present are equally entitled to their share of "active participation", without distinction of whether they are clerical or lay.

The dark underbelly of the progressivists' dream

This subversive power-to-the-people message is perfectly encapsulated in the teaching of the Constitution on the Liturgy §28 which states:

“In liturgical celebrations each one, minister or layperson, who has an office to perform, should do all of, but only, those parts which pertain to that office by the nature of the rite and the principles of the liturgy”.

In making such a statement, the reformers revealed their covert plans to Protestantize the liturgy. For, it subtly suggests that Catholic worship is *simply and solely* a joint enterprise between the priest and the people in which the latter have an essential liturgical office to perform – a proposition condemned by the Council of Trent.

This intention was confirmed by Fr Ralph Wiltgen in an interview with one of the Council’s bishops immediately before the final vote on the Constitution on the Liturgy (1963):

“Bishop Zauner [of Linz, Austria] told me that four important aims or principles were reflected in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. ‘The first is that divine worship must be a community action; that is, that **the priest should do everything with the active participation of the people, and never alone**’. The use of the vernacular, he said, was a necessary condition for such participation”. ⁴²⁶ [emphasis added]

What could be more calculated to make the priest appear “one of the people” than to have all speak and act in a common enterprise? This had been the cherished aim of the Liturgical Movement from Beauduin to Vatican II and remains the underlying major premise of the *Novus Ordo*.

“The rising tide lifts all boats”

Here we will consider how the reformers’ aim to “narrow the gap” between the clergy and the laity was realized in practice. The revolutionary tide of Vatican II artificially raised all the faithful to the status of “true actors” in the liturgy, giving them equal rights to the clergy, by virtue of their common Baptism, “to perform some particular ministry or function in the celebration”. ⁴²⁷

But, if all the members of the assembly, including the priest, have their own special responsibility in the enactment of the Mass, there is nothing particularly unique about the status of priests. As the Grand Inquisitor sang in Gilbert and Sullivan’s Opera, “**When everybody’s somebody, then no one’s anybody**”. ⁴²⁸ As a result, the only person who is “somebody” in the Mass (i.e. the one who stands in the place of Christ) ends up as “nobody”

special in the eyes of the assembly. That would negate the whole point of treating priests as a separate and higher category, capable of exercising power and authority in spiritual matters over the laity.

A disguised attack on the priesthood

However, the Orwellian language of Progressivism has disguised this radical rearrangement of roles as humility and generosity on the part of the modern clergy. They pretend that the Church has been guilty of “clericalism” for most of its history in “excluding” the laity from “active participation”, and that they must make amends for past “injustices”.

Uniquely among all religions, the Mass, the ministerial priesthood and the role of both in the salvation of souls are all indissolubly linked. Attacking any one of these three elements, as Luther knew full well, is to attack Catholicism itself. Thus, with the imposition of the *Novus Ordo* reform, which apes the language and customs of Protestantism, the attack from without was hugely reinforced by the attack from within.

One of the many misunderstandings brought about by the 20th century liturgical reforms is that the choir is simply a section of the congregation, a mixed group of lay people whose role is to lead the rest of the faithful in song. That may be true in Protestant churches, and is certainly the case in the *Novus Ordo* liturgy, as the post-Vatican II English bishops explained:

“The choir remains at all times a part of the assembly. It can serve the assembly by leading it in sung prayer and by reinforcing or enhancing the song of the assembly”. [429](#)

But it is completely foreign to a Catholic understanding of the choir as a clerical entity. The various forms of liturgical chant were originally written by clerics *for their own use* in choir, not for the congregation.

Pope Pius X’s reference in his *motu proprio* to the “Choir of Levites” is of the greatest significance in identifying the role of singers as inherently liturgical and, therefore, clerical in nature. It said in a nutshell all we need to know about the distinction between the clergy and the rest of the faithful as far as the duty to sing the liturgy is concerned.

In the Old Testament, the Levites were set apart and consecrated to God, either as priests to offer sacrifice, or as their assistants in various sacral roles, including singing. [430](#) And in the New Testament, the choir was meant to be a separate entity composed of clerics whose role was to assist the

celebrating priest in his task of mediating the liturgy to the faithful. Where there were insufficient clerics available, their numbers could be supplemented by laymen, but only on the understanding, as Pius X explained, that “singers in the church, even when they are laymen, are really taking the place of the ecclesiastical choir”. [431](#)

Might we not find it ironic that the cliché “preaching to the choir” (the seating area once reserved for the clergy in the great cathedrals of Christendom) can no longer be understood in its original sense because the clergy themselves have voided it of meaning?

It is not without significance that the progressive reformers showed no awareness that the distinction between the clergy and the laity is “by divine institution”, as the 1917 Code of Canon Law stated. [432](#) Nor did they acknowledge that this divinely appointed distinction must be observed in the liturgy, as in every other aspect of the Church’s life – hence their opposition to the idea that it is the right and duty of the clergy, not the laity, to sing the liturgy.

As their chief spokesman, Mgr Frederick McManus, wrote in 1956, when explaining the rationale behind Pius XII’s reforms in which he himself was a major player:

“When a choir chants those parts of Holy Mass or other rites which **belong to the people**, the faithful are not doing what they are appointed by their baptismal character to do – namely, worship God as members of Christ. In the restored Holy Week, the clear directions indicate again and again that **the people should not be denied this right**”. [433](#) [emphases added]

Every one of these claims is specious, anti-clerical and theologically incorrect. The reformers saw everything in terms of a power struggle, with Vatican II representing liberation from the clutches of a dominating clergy and a return to “ownership” of the liturgy by the People of God. The idea that parts of the Mass “belong to the people” – in the sense that they alone must sing or recite them – was an invention of the Liturgical Movement. [434](#) In the *Novus Ordo*, some priests omit the *Sanctus* and the *Agnus Dei* altogether if the congregation remains silent, while others refuse to proceed with the Mass if no one is willing to bring up the gifts at the Offertory.

As for the presumed “right” of the laity to *active* participation by reason of their baptismal character, this illusory principle does not correlate with any Catholic doctrine. It is inadmissible to claim that Baptism empowers lay

people to assume the divinely ordained role of the priest who baptized them, as if he were thereby handing them the means to undermine his own ministry. Yet that is the tacit assumption and inescapable conclusion of §14 of the Constitution on the Liturgy which states that “active participation...is their right and duty by reason of their baptism”. Baptism only gives the laity the right to have the Mass and Sacraments made available to them and to *participate spiritually* in these means of salvation.

“Active participation” in the Consecration

As “active participation” was to be a dimension of everything that is done in the liturgy, all members of the congregation are deemed to be wholly involved **in every part of the proceedings**, including the Consecration. In the *Novus Ordo*, at the point where the so-called “Institution Narrative” replaced the Words of Consecration, the “people’s portion” is to say or sing a series of “Memorial Acclamations” as part of the so-called Eucharistic Prayers (themselves a replacement for the traditional Canon).

The rationale behind this revolutionary reform was provided by Fr Yves Congar, the chief proponent of the novel “theology of the liturgical assembly” who stated with reference to the priest’s power to consecrate the bread and wine:

“this does not mean that he can do it alone, that is, when he remains alone. He does not, in other words, consecrate the elements by virtue of a power which is inherent in him”. [435](#)

“Active participation” favours heresy

According to this “new theology” which echoes Protestant perspectives, it is the “active participation” of the gathered assembly, talking and singing together, which makes Christ present in the Eucharist. Consequently, the doctrine that the words uttered by the priest at the Consecration are the unique *cause* of the Real Presence in the Mass is never made clear in the *Novus Ordo*. It is obvious that the reformers wanted both the Real Presence and the priest’s unique role in effecting transubstantiation to be ignored and forgotten.

Under the influence of progressive reformers, the Constitution on the Liturgy (and all subsequent documents from the Holy See and Episcopal

Conferences) adopted the Protestant principle that the vocal responses of the gathered community are essential for the integrity of the liturgy. [436](#)

Fr Joseph Jungmann, who was no ordinary run-of-the-mill liturgist – he actually drafted some of the Constitution on the Liturgy – favoured this concept, as we can see from his description of the liturgies of the early Church:

“In the liturgical action the participation of the people was manifested especially by the fact that they did not merely listen to the prayers of the priest in silence but **ratified** them by their acclamations”. [437](#) [emphasis added]

Even the Canon of the Mass is not considered to be complete without the people’s Amen at the final Doxology. The *General Instruction* (§79h) states that the final part of the Eucharistic Prayer is “affirmed and concluded by the people’s Amen”. Bugnini stated with reference to the Eucharistic Prayer: “they are to **ratify** with their ‘Amen’ what the priest has done and asked in the assembly’s name”. [438](#) [emphasis added]

The use of the term “ratify” as a necessary action on the part of the congregation is most illuminating. It reveals the intention of the reformers who devised the *Novus Ordo* to embrace beliefs and practices not endorsed by the Church.

Pope Pius XII had specifically condemned those who “go so far as to hold that the people must **confirm and ratify** the Sacrifice if it is to have its proper force and value”, and added: “it is in no wise required that the people **ratify** what the sacred minister has done”. (*Mediator Dei* §§95-96) [emphasis added] Yet this was an indispensable requirement of the *General Instruction*, and was recognized as such by the English bishops when they mentioned “the profound importance of the assembly’s ratification and acclamation” at the end of the Canon. [439](#)

Ratification, a term suggestive of heresy

The idea of the assembly’s “ratification” is doubly anomalous, a deviation not only from the millennial *lex orandi*, but also from the *lex credendi*. As a term borrowed from legal transactions, it gives the impression that the expressed consent of the people is necessary to make the Consecration

officially valid, whereas its validity is ensured *ex vi verborum* i.e. by virtue of the words of the priest alone.

The boot is on the other foot

Moreover, as only a higher authority can ratify a transaction, the further impression is given that the people occupy a superior plane to the celebrating priest. The agenda to undermine the traditional Catholic priesthood is revealed in this revolutionary model of “active participation” in which the proper relationship between the clergy and the laity has been reversed completely. But that reversal was precisely the objective of the Liturgical Movement.

The people are encouraged to usurp the authority of God

It is God Who is meant to ratify the Sacrifice of His Son, as is made clear in the *Quam oblationem* of the Canon, where the priest requests God to ratify (“*ratam facere*”) the Sacrifice he is about to offer *in persona Christi*. As Dom Guéranger explained: “it must needs be **ratified, approved, confirmed in Heaven**, as a Thing most truly Good and Fitting”. [440](#) [emphasis added]

But then, as the evidence overwhelmingly shows, the *Novus Ordo* was always a man-centred liturgy in which the “People of God” take centre stage.

The congregation has the principal voice

In the wake of Vatican II, traditional choirmasters and organists – many of whom were of professional status – wishing to preserve the Church’s treasury of sacred music, were astonished to find that their services were no longer required, and that their field of expertise was flooded by guitar groups and congregational singing. They immediately found themselves with the impossible task of trying to balance the musical heritage of the Church with the demands of the *Novus Ordo* liturgy.

The clear message of the reformers was that congregational singing should take precedence over sacred chant sung by the choir, as Mgr McManus explained as early as 1956:

“the trained choir may lead and encourage the people – and above all, **never seek to restrict the participation of the faithful**. If on occasion this means that the responses, for example, may not be sung perfectly, the act of worship on the part of the assembled people will nevertheless be pleasing to almighty God. And **the strong and united worship of the whole Church must never be subordinated to technical perfection of music**”. [441](#) [emphases added]

In a radical inversion of values, respect for the magnificent achievements of choirs in masterworks of skill and beauty was lost in the indiscriminate desire to drag standards down to within reach of the people.

Blaming the victim

Archbishop Bugnini stated that “the people must truly sing in order to participate actively as desired by the liturgical Constitution”, and denounced conservatives who believed that participation could be achieved by listening to the choir. He airily dismissed their earnest concerns with the insult that they “betrayed a mentality that could not come to grips with new pastoral needs”. [442](#)

As the musicians had little or no leverage in the matter, they largely withdrew from the fray. In his Memoirs, Bugnini describes the 10-year battle royal he conducted against the conservative musicians, [443](#) from which he emerged victorious. Like a latter-day Goliath, and leader of the (liturgical) philistines, Bugnini may have won this battle, [444](#) but not the war, which is still being fought by traditionalists as a counter-revolution to regain the Church’s full liturgical and spiritual patrimony.

How conservative expectations were violated

The Constitution on the Liturgy was a document which ostensibly championed the tradition of Gregorian Chant and the Latin language but which, when examined more closely, contained a number of escape clauses which rendered that tradition inert.

Conservatives are fond of quoting §36.1: “the use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites”, and demand that the Constitution be obeyed. But, by focusing only on the “positives” of the article, they overlook, or perhaps fail to understand, the caveat in the same sentence:

salvo particulari iure (without prejudice to particular law), which came to mean if not prohibited by the diocesan bishops. ⁴⁴⁵

Even most of the Council Fathers had no conception in 1963 of the new doctrine of “collegiality” being planned or of the imminent rise of the National Episcopal Conferences which would be granted unprecedented power over the liturgy. ⁴⁴⁶ They made the fatal mistake of assuming that the Council was in continuity with Tradition. It was an assumption that was rapidly to be confounded.

Bugnini later explained the real intention behind §36.1 (which was unknown to the Council Fathers when they voted):

“When, therefore, the Constitution allowed the introduction of the vernaculars, it **necessarily anticipated that the preservation of this “treasure of sacred music” would be dependent solely on celebrations in Latin**”. ⁴⁴⁷ [emphasis added]

The significance here is that the deception is based on exploitation of the victims’ assumptions. Everyone assumed that “Latin rites” in §36.1 meant Western rites. But, while Bugnini’s explanation was factually correct, it was part of his stock-in-trade of rhetorical tactics and ploys, a subtle shifting of focus with intent to deceive. No one suspected that he was making a tautological statement that Latin is to be used in rites celebrated in Latin, or that he was being dishonest while telling the truth. In other words, he spoke *a* truth, but not the one he knew the conservative voters expected.

A progressivist victory

Let us now look at other paragraphs in the Constitution on the Liturgy which deceive the reader into thinking that a statement is more conservative than it really is. This was achieved by the rhetorical device known as “paltering” – the use of truthful information to give a misleading impression.

The Constitution specified that Gregorian Chant “should be given pride of place”; but the point about it is that, instead of safeguarding that mandate, it betrayed it in the same sentence with the qualifier “*ceteris paribus*” (other things being equal). The unequal factors overriding this stipulation were, as always, “active participation”, the vernacular and adaptation to contemporary cultures.

Two years after the closing of the Council, the Instruction *Musicam Sacram* (1967), the work of the *Consilium* to implement the Constitution on the Liturgy, openly revealed that the “pride of place” clause relating to Gregorian Chant applied only to “sung liturgical services celebrated in Latin”. (§50)

This applies also to the Constitution’s grudging concession that Polyphony is “not excluded”. (§116) However, the reformers made sure that it would have little or no place in the new liturgy which, as events would prove, was unsuited to accommodate it in either the spirit or the logistics of the *Novus Ordo* Mass.

“What all can’t sing, no one shall sing”

Besides, in what looked like an act of ideological spite, *Musicam Sacram* (§16c), clarifying the Constitution, deprecated and officially cast out of the liturgy the tradition of the *exclusive* rendering of the Mass Ordinary and Proper by the choir, on the grounds that the people could not join in everything. It stated that “the usage of entrusting to the choir alone the entire singing of the whole Proper and of the whole Ordinary, to the complete exclusion of the people’s participation in the singing, is to be deprecated”.

So the “pride of place” reputedly allotted to Gregorian Chant was, in reality, intended all along for the congregation, whose preferential treatment over the choir led to the marginalization and demise of polyphony.

Another escape clause in the Constitution was *pro opportunitate* (§115), meaning when it is (judged) appropriate, which in practice means that something is merely optional and may be omitted. This expression is often found in the new liturgical books. It was intended to give a certain liberty and flexibility to the rubrics. When taken to its logical conclusion, it allowed for the exclusion of certain traditions such as Gregorian Chant, incense, bells etc.

The gloves are off

As soon as the reformers felt their victory secure, they cast aside all pretence of preserving the Church’s musical heritage.

In 1987, the Congregation for Divine Worship stated:

“Any performance of sacred music which takes place during a celebration should be fully in harmony with that celebration. This often means that musical compositions which date from a period when the active participation of the faithful was not emphasized as the source of the authentic Christian spirit (*SC* No. 14; *Pius X Tra le sollecitudini*) are **no longer to be considered suitable for inclusion within liturgical celebrations**”. ⁴⁴⁸ [emphasis added]

Apart from the absurdity of using Pius X for the destruction of what he held most dear, ⁴⁴⁹ the virtual disappearance of Chant and Polyphony – deliberately engineered by the reformers themselves – was then used as an argument to justify banishing them from the liturgy.

What, then, became of the Constitution’s statement that the “treasury of sacred music is to be preserved and cultivated with great care”? (§114) Two years later, it was relegated to “concert programmes both inside and outside of church”, a decision “deemed necessary in the pursuit of **an end of greater importance, namely the active participation of the faithful**”. ⁴⁵⁰ [emphasis added]

There could hardly have been a clearer admission of the man-made, man-centred nature of the *Novus Ordo* liturgy. This shows that the basic struggle underlying the reform was a moral and spiritual one, that is, whether the liturgy exists for the self-expression of the people, or, as Pius X taught, primarily for the glorification of God. The essence of the conflict, therefore, was not simply a matter of musical style and personal taste, but about the correct perception of God and how we should worship Him in the liturgy.

The Constitution praised the Church’s musical heritage as “a treasure of inestimable value” (§112), while permitting it to be turned into its own negation. Such hypocrisy makes a mockery of Tradition and is reminiscent of an adage by the Roman satirist, Juvenal: “Virtue is praised then left in the cold”. ⁴⁵¹

Time to stop chasing the white whale ⁴⁵²

Even among the more conservative Catholics, there are still some who suffer from what might be termed the “Moby Dick syndrome”. They insist on chasing the ever-elusive “correct” form of “active participation”. But it is a self-defeating exercise: “active participation” was never anything more than a subterfuge to undermine the ministerial priesthood. Why should any

Catholic worthy of the name support the fanatical mission of the Liturgical Establishment to destroy its own spiritual heritage?

They fail to grasp that “active participation” has become the law that subverts the law (of prayer). It is a problem inherent in the liturgical reform since the time of Pius XII.

What they do not realize is that their efforts to restore the fullness of Tradition are always going to be thwarted by the Liturgical Establishment, who would never allow them fully to defend the Church’s musical heritage. So they are left with the choice of either compromising traditional values or bending the *Novus Ordo* rules to accommodate some forbidden traditional practices.

In such a hostile environment they may achieve some limited measure of success, only to find that, somewhere along the line, Bugnini’s ghost has come back to haunt them.

CONCLUSION

With the recent provision of in-depth research and documentation, we are now in a position to make a more informed assessment of the 20th-century Liturgical Revolution than has hitherto been the case. This reveals the initial work of Dom Lambert Beauduin to be the point of change from which everything else followed.

Beauduin was a larger-than-life figure who could wield a blend of rhetoric, strategy and ideology to assert a sort of intellectual dominance over the Liturgical Movement that made a lasting impression. From his 1909 Malines speech onwards, he contended that it was the task of the clergy to indoctrinate their parishioners into going along with the rolling revolution of “active participation”, a process that is still unfolding in our day. His supporters among the bishops were happy to hold their critical faculties in abeyance and repeat his “grand narrative” about “active participation”. And a number of priests immediately set about the task of persuading the hapless faithful to embrace the new liturgical thinking as their own.

It was a propaganda coup of incalculable proportions. As we have seen throughout this volume, Beauduin’s ideas, including the very phraseology he used at Malines, were adopted by papal Commissions on the liturgy and incorporated into the Decrees issued by successive popes from Pius XI to Paul VI. Its success can be measured today in the proportion of Catholics – clergy and laity – who have come to reject their own liturgical tradition on a worldwide scale.

A salient feature of the Movement started by Beauduin is that it was shot through with false assumptions and anti-Catholic sentiment from the very beginning: defamatory remarks about the role of priests in the Mass to prejudice the people against them; serious misjudgements of the faithful who attended the Mass; contempt for their devotions; suppression of centuries-old liturgical traditions. At this point we may be tempted to ask: Why does hardly one in the Church today object when such obvious bias and distortion are presented as facts? Most of the world’s bishops have imbibed Beauduin’s ideological position via Vatican II: they, too, have strategic interests to promote: (“Ecumenism”, Left-wing agendas etc.) which would be severely hampered by the “rigidity” of the traditional rites and the attachment of the faithful to them.

And it was precisely because of this attachment that the liturgical reforms had to be imposed as an act of top-down bureaucratic control with more than a passing resemblance to the totalitarian policies of Socialist governments in the 20th century. The Liturgical Establishment, moreover, has always refused to acknowledge that the spirit of general hostility against Catholic values which was responsible for destroying the traditional liturgy had been there from the start of the Liturgical Movement.

As for the sudden introduction of “active participation”, this was not a genuinely Catholic liturgical development, but a quasi-mythological concept that sprang fully formed, like Venus from the sea, in order to meet the reformers’ perceptions of the “good of the Church”. But their supposed benevolence is belied by an inconvenient fact. The radical ideas for liturgical reform espoused by Beauduin were clearly in conflict with the reality of Catholic worship through which the Church has for centuries succeeded in imparting the life of Christ to its members, without the need of “active participation”. As for the faithful for whom this inestimable “good” was destined, they found themselves regimented into constant “dialoguing” with the priest, whilst their natural liberty to pray in their own way was violated.

Moreover, no convincing justification has ever been given for lay “active participation”. The spiritual participation of the faithful in the liturgy is indeed a universal concept, the indispensable means, as Pope Pius X said, of deriving the true Christian spirit from the Church’s ceremonies. The problem, however, came when a new “virtue” – “*active* participation” – was promoted and made incumbent on all. Common sense tells us that, although the reformers claimed that this novelty was also indispensable, it was demonstrably not, for the history of the Church bears witness to the sanctification of the faithful through the liturgy without it. Even though lay “active participation” is not of the essence of Catholic worship, and can even be a serious impediment to true participation, it nonetheless continues to be presented as a self-evident truth. In the minds of the liturgical reformers, nothing counts as a reason to reject or challenge it.

We have reason to deplore the new emphasis on “active participation” because it made traditional values and interests subservient to policies arbitrated by progressive clergy, often in direct conflict with the needs and preferences of the Catholic faithful. Another baneful consequence was that the authority of both the liturgy and Tradition was weakened in proportion

as it was placed at the service of a principle of progressivism – that of “active participation”. And it was that progressivism, supported increasingly from the pontificate of Pius XI onwards, which would find its ultimate triumph in Vatican II’s Constitution on the Liturgy.

Not many people know that the 1956 reforms of Holy Week were the product of about half a dozen members of Pius XII’s 1948 Liturgical Commission – a classic case of the bureaucratic tail wagging the ecclesiastical dog. Although the liturgy should be beyond the manipulation of any individual or group, in the Holy Week reforms a definite group and a definite viewpoint were proclaiming themselves. Indeed, the work of the Commission demonstrates the exclusive in-group mentality of the reformers, and served to reinforce the “elitist” status of the Liturgical Movement. (This is, however, richly ironic considering that the driving force of the Movement was to “liberate” the people from the clutches of a “dominating” elite by handing them the means of “active participation” in the liturgy).

From 1956, it was becoming clear that Pope Pius XII was yielding ground to this “managerial” caucus of liturgical experts who saw themselves as indispensable organizers of a new liturgy for the Church. But had he any reason to believe that the reformers knew better than the traditionalist bishops or, for that matter, the faithful themselves, what was for the good of the Church? Was “active participation” in general and “Dialogue” in particular a liturgical blueprint to advance their spiritual wellbeing? The aftermath of the reforms speak for themselves in the dwindling Catholic population, dearth of priests, closed churches and empty seminaries around us. One could even say that the numbers of Catholics attending Mass decreased in proportion as “active participation” increased. After devastating a thousand years of received and approved liturgical tradition, the reformers have left nothing remaining in which to establish any kind of true participation in the liturgy handed down to us by our spiritual forebears.

From random beginnings in various countries under the leadership of notable personalities such as Beauduin, Michel, Herwegen, Parsch, Guardini and Bugnini, the reformers coalesced into organized pressure groups with some episcopal support. All of these leaders took liberties with liturgical laws, in contrast to those conservative bishops throughout the world who were observing them with strict fidelity.

We must not lose sight of the fact that liturgical anarchy was steadily increasing under Pius XII's watch, and that these deviations became entrenched precisely because of lack of firm ecclesiastical control. Pius XII's verbal reprimands were not matched by corrective actions to prevent recurrence. He did not, for instance, take steps to prevent bishops who were involved in liturgical revolution from pursuing their aims, or ensure that they disciplined radical priests. It is simply inconceivable that he could not have mustered adequate support from among the world's conservative bishops – it was, after all, the age of “ultramontanism” – to neutralize the effects of the Liturgical Movement. And as he failed to give a firm and consistent signal of a united effort to defeat such dissident tactics, the progressivists became emboldened and gradually gained the upper hand. In a kind of vicious circle, that happened only because many repeatedly escaped being held to account for their actions.

So it is not to be wondered at that the Holy Week reforms encouraged dissidence and contempt for the law because the Pope was seen to acquiesce with those who had been acting against liturgical law for years before 1956. In spite of his warning that no one should introduce unauthorized innovations into the liturgy, his acquiescence in widespread dissent was an encouragement for the reformers to commit further violations in the expectation that the official Church would eventually “catch up” with them once again.

What is not always appreciated in this connection is the wider ramifications of the liturgical reforms. An unfortunate consequence of Pius XII's decision to reform the Holy Week ceremonies was that the disobedience of those who implemented the changes *before* they were officially approved, and who promoted still further changes, was tolerated in practice.

Once this was done with something as sacred as the liturgy, and on the basis of a set of opinions prevalent in the Liturgical Movement, the signal was given that other changes considered urgent or “pastoral” could also be made on some trumped-up pretext. And these changes, once accepted by the leadership of the Church, would not be confined to the liturgy but would, as a logical development, embrace “new understandings” of the Faith, the Church, other religions, marriage and family life, “human needs”, whatever. At least, that eventuality has come to pass and can be confirmed in the post-Vatican II era.

What we need to keep in mind is that, from the time of Pius XII onwards, the reformers considered themselves no longer bound by traditional forms and the values they enshrined. The damage they have done, moreover, is utterly disproportionate to the number of reformers who spearheaded the changes in the first half of the 20th century.

It is an unfortunate fact that most Catholics today, even among traditionalists, have no conception of the true nature and extent of the Holy Week reforms. There is still virtually no grasp of what was at stake: the intended subversion of the traditional rite by progressive reformers through the medium of “active participation”.

Even before the Holy Week reforms were put into action in their experimental and optional stage, a few lone voices warned that this far-reaching development would almost certainly lead the faithful into doctrinal confusion. Few at that time, however, could have foreseen quite how profoundly the 1956 reform of Holy Week would help undermine true spiritual participation and an appreciation of what is distinctively Catholic.

In the Holy Week reforms, we can, with the benefit of hindsight, see more clearly taking shape the ground plan for more far-reaching mutations not only in Catholic worship but also in theology particularly as it concerned the nature of the ordained priesthood. And the more these values have been eroded, the more the Church has allowed itself to be drawn into a vortex of appeasement, giving increasing ground to a secular outlook which threatens to destroy it – and with it the Church’s identity as a Divine institution ordained to a supernatural end: the salvation of souls.

Pius XII was evidently aware early in his pontificate that a liturgical revolution was being planned, for he reprimanded some deviations from tradition in *Mediator Dei* (1947). Yet in an unprecedented abdication of papal responsibility, he allowed the radical members of the Liturgical Movement to impose their will on the rest of the Church, forcing dioceses around the world to reorder their liturgies so as to coincide with what the liturgical reformers thought important.

Here we are reminded of the ancient Greek historian, Thucydides, who commented disapprovingly on the conflict between Athens and the inhabitants of Melos (Melians) that “the strong do what they have the power to do, and the weak suffer what they must”. ⁴⁵³ How ironic that we can find a parallel with these words, written in the 5th century B.C., in the 20th century liturgical reforms.

Thucydides was describing a situation in which both reason and justice were left out of account in the formulation of policy decisions and their practical application; where no attempt was made to be fair and impartial; where customary law was violated and ethical standards disregarded; where the rights of the weaker party were trampled underfoot. It was in vain that the Melians (like the 20th-century Catholic traditionalists) appealed to a sense of honour and decency in support of their cause. Having trusted in the presumed loyalty of Sparta, they were deserted by those who should have protected them. And yet his description, transported 2,500 years into the future, shows some points of similarity with the way in which Pius XII's Liturgical Commission conducted its tyrannical campaign against the traditional Holy Week liturgy.

Whatever *direct* role Pius XII may or may not have played in the development of the progressive reformers' thinking, the fact is that the reforms he authorized demonstrably adopted their agenda. He was the Pope who unleashed the demons of "active participation" at every opportunity available at the time.

Had he, however, been willing to govern the Church in the manner of his more worthy predecessors, he would have thrown his entire weight behind the traditional bishops who protested against the changes, on the grounds that the very future of the Church was at stake over these reforms. But he chose to fight a rearguard action using a policy of appeasement that strengthened the hand of reformers who were trying to subvert Catholic liturgical tradition.

If Pius XII had been more supportive of Tradition, Mgr Gromier – a liturgical scholar whose expertise was matched by his courage and integrity – would have been considered a prime candidate for appointment as head of the Congregation of Rites to defend the Church at a particularly critical time. Instead, he was grossly maligned and sidelined by the Pope's own appointees and their associates in the Liturgical Movement.

But what about the much trumpeted "pastoral" nature of the changes? This was, of course, an illusory claim – there can be no pastoral concern where the wishes and the rights of the faithful at large were disregarded. They, too, underwent the same fate as Mgr Gromier.

We have seen how the two relevant advisory and regulatory bodies of the Holy See – i.e. the papal Commission and the Congregation of Rites – had effectively been rigged to favour the plans of the progressive reformers

whose contempt for Tradition and the ordinary faithful Pope Pius XII largely indulged.

No one could successfully appeal to the Holy See to defend the Church against such subversive reforms. For this once-powerful traditional army was gradually coming under the control of the enemies of Tradition. From the very top of the ecclesiastical tree, the Congregation of Rites gave up its authority to control the situation, and degenerated from being the Church's front line of defence against attempts by reformers to undermine the liturgy into a fifth column to facilitate the desires of the same reformers.

Instead of fulfilling the mandate for which it was instituted in 1588, it gave the constant and recurring message that the traditional liturgy – the foundation-stone on which the Faith rested – was deficient, “undemocratic” and incapable of inspiring modern man. To regard the public worship of the Church in this way is to believe that the liturgy is essentially a Procrustean bed, a means of refashioning Tradition to serve the interests of a self-referential group.

As for the Liturgical Commission, its priorities were to clear the decks of all elements that would hinder the “active participation” of the assembly, so no quarter would be given to the devotional life of the faithful which did not support this aim. But these approved devotions, too, were an indispensable part of Catholic life and could not be dismissed or undermined without spiritual harm to those who practised them. The drive to rid the Church of their presence gave the impression that they were no longer to be upheld as worthwhile.

Whatever countermeasures Pius XII may have put in place to combat the negative effects of the reforms he instituted, they were too little too late – the equivalent of locking the stable door after the horse had been allowed, or even encouraged with a slap on the rump, to bolt. It was evident even in those pre-Vatican II years that respect for Tradition was already declining because it was becoming less and less supported by ecclesiastical authority.

Most traditionalists today are likely to react with shock and outrage that anyone should consider Pius XII – the “last traditional Pope” in their estimation – to have been in any way responsible for contributing to the eventual destruction of the liturgy. He could not have done so, they argue, *because* he was the “last traditional pope”. But that is a circular argument, and it betrays their lack of knowledge of the facts associated with his pontificate.

It is true that the state of the liturgy in the 1950s was, relatively speaking, more traditional than in the 60s, but we have to take into consideration that under Pius XII it was being undermined by fault lines and tectonic shifts which presaged the coming tsunami. All the evidence adduced in this study indicates that Pius XII helped strengthen the radical aims of the Liturgical Movement. It was just the beginning of the betrayal and abandonment of the Catholic liturgical heritage.

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¹ *Sacrosanctum Concilium* §14

² A “stick of rock” is a familiar expression to British people, and is associated with seaside resorts, such as Blackpool, Brighton etc. It is a long cylindrical piece of confectionery, usually peppermint flavour, with the name of the town stamped throughout its length. In Graham Greene’s novel,

Brighton Rock, the character, Ida, says: “It’s like those sticks of rock: bite it all the way down, you’ll still read Brighton”.

³ *The Adventure of Silver Blaze*, a story by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, in which Holmes investigates the disappearance of the eponymous racehorse and the apparent murder of its trainer. Holmes grasped the significance of the guard dog’s silence, for the midnight visitor was one the dog knew well. And, as he explained, “one true inference invariably suggests others”, he soon unravelled the mystery.

⁴ The text is reproduced in Pierre Combe, *The Restoration of Gregorian Chant*, Catholic University of America Press, 2008, Appendix III, p. 421

⁵ Sacred Congregation of Rites, *Ordinatio quoad sacram musicam*, ASS, 1884, Vol. XVII, pp. 340-349

⁶ This document was printed in *The Tablet*, ‘The Pope and Church Music’, 9 January 1904

⁷ Pope Pius X, 1903 *motu proprio*, § 25: “let the above-mentioned traditional Gregorian Chant be cultivated by all with diligence and love, according to the Tridentine prescriptions”.

⁸ Robert Hayburn, *Papal Legislation on Sacred Music: 95 AD to 1977 AD*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1979, p. 220

⁹ Ramón Saiz-Pardo Hurtado, ‘Angelo di Santi e la musica liturgica: i fondamenti teologici di una nuova disciplina’, *Il Santo, Rivista Francescana di Storia, Dottrina, Arte*, 2017, pp. 32, 35

¹⁰ The *Secretaria brevium ad principes et epistolarum latinarum* was charged with the preparation in Latin of papal and curial documents.

¹¹ J. B. O’Connell, *The Celebration of Mass: A Study of the Rubrics of the Roman Missal*, Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1940, p. 10

¹² R. Gabriel Pivarnik, OP, Foreword by Kevin W. Irwin, *Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Liturgical Participation*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2013, p. xix

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. xxii

¹⁴ “When *I* use a word”, Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less”.

“The question is”, said Alice, “whether you *can* make words mean so many different things”.

“The question is”, said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master – that’s all”.

¹⁵ Article 37 states that the Church can admit into the liturgy “**anything** in these peoples’ way of life which is not **indissolubly** bound up with superstition and error”. It is left to individual judgement to decide what “indissolubly” entails and which customs are linked to the “spirit of the liturgy” interpreted by reforming liturgists. But, as Vatican II’s “opening to the world” positively discourages disapproval of secular values, there is precious little scope left for exclusion of “**anything** in these peoples’ way of life”. [emphases added]

Article 38 indicates that these provisions are not limited to “mission countries”, and can apply to *any* group of people in the world.

Article 40 calls for “an even more radical adaptation of the liturgy” to be implemented where judged suitable by the liturgical reformers.

¹⁶ Etymology, the study of the origin and development of words, comes from the Greek *etymos* (true). It helps us to understand better the true sense of a word as it is used today.

¹⁷ Paul the Deacon transcribed and preserved parts of a lexicon written by the Roman grammarian, Festus, as a contribution to Charlemagne’s library. Paul’s summary, *Epitome Festi De verborum significatu* (Epitome of Festus’s “On the meaning of words”), still survives. According to the Festus Project of University College London, “The text, even in its present mutilated state, is an important source for scholars of Roman history”.

Paul’s entry for *actuosus* is mentioned in the most authoritative of all Latin dictionaries, the *Totius Latinitatis Lexicon* compiled by the 18th century Italian philologist, Fr Egidio Forcellini. Forcellini’s

Herculean work, conducted over a period of almost 40 years, formed the basis of all academically respectable dictionaries that have since been published.

¹⁸ Egidio Forcellini, *Totius Latinitatis lexicon*, London, 1828, p. 32

¹⁹ Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000, p. 198

²⁰ Cardinal Godfried Danneels, quoted in Keith Pecklers SJ, *Liturgy in a Postmodern World*, Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd, 2006, p. 7

²¹ The phrase was popularized by Françoise Thom in *La Langue de Bois*, Paris: Julliard, 1987.

²² The Pio-Benedictine *Codex Juris Canonici* (1917) was drawn up by Pius X and promulgated by Benedict XV.

²³ “With zeal and patience, pastors of souls must promote the liturgical instruction of the faithful, and also their *active participation in the liturgy both internally and externally, taking into account their age and condition, their way of life, and standard of religious culture*”. [emphasis added]

²⁴ See *Acta Sanctae Sedis*, 36, 1903-1904, p. 329 for the Italian version, p. 387 (misprinted as 587) for the Latin version.

²⁵ The ancient Romans calculated their dates backwards by subtracting the stated number of days in the date from a fixed point in each month. As the *Kalendae* designated the first day of every month, if we count back from 1 December 10 days inclusively, we come to 22 November. So *X Kalendas Decembris* = 22 November.

²⁶ Thus we read, for instance, in *De Bello Africo Commentarius* that “*Quibus ex rebus Caesar vehementer commotus*” (Caesar was greatly alarmed by these things) and in *De Bello Civili* that his famous Ninth Legion was “*vehementer attenuata*” (greatly diminished).

²⁷ In §6, the Pope particularly deplored the style of music which had recently been used in the liturgy: “Among the different kinds of modern music, that which appears less suitable for accompanying the functions of public worship is the theatrical style, which was in the greatest vogue, especially in Italy, during the last century. This of its very nature is diametrically opposed to Gregorian Chant and classic polyphony, and therefore to the most important law of all good sacred music. Besides the intrinsic structure, the rhythm and what is known as the conventionalism of this style adapt themselves but badly to the requirements of true liturgical music”.

²⁸ Clarity of enunciation was also emphasized by Canon 8 of the Council of Trent.

²⁹ This is obviously not the intended meaning here for two reasons. First, Gregorian Chant as a distinctive corpus of music did not exist in the early Christian era. Secondly, the use of the Imperfect Tense “*solevasi*” in Italian indicates an action that had been going on for an extended period of time (such as the Gregorian Chant tradition), not something that had disappeared a long time ago (such as congregational singing) for which a different Past Tense would have had to be used.

³⁰ Virgil’s *Aeneid* celebrates the *mos maiorum* of the Roman people, as depicted in the character of Aeneas. He epitomized the Roman ideal of *pietas*, the core concept of ancient Roman morality which included duties to religion, the family, the wider community and the *patria*.

³¹ The self-styled “official” Italian version in the *Acta Sanctae Sedis* says “*sempre bene eseguite*” (always well sung), but *bene* (well) does not accurately translate the superlative adverb *optime* (to the highest degree) in the Latin version. This is one of several mistranslations found in the Italian version. [emphasis added]

³² St Thomas More, *The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, ed. Louis Schuster et al, Vol. 8 of *The Complete Works of St Thomas More*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973, Book 2, p. 161

³³ The English mistranslation refers to this concern as “a leading one”, implying that there were others of the same ranking, such as “active participation”, but Pius X had left no room for equivocation: “*illa principem tenet locum*” (**that one** holds the highest place). [emphasis added]

³⁴ As an aside, we can see how this worked in practice as a direct result of the false principles – “opening to the world”, “ecumenism” etc. – introduced by Vatican II in contradiction to the Church’s Tradition. The ensuing toll of destruction speaks for itself.

³⁵ St Thomas More, *ibid.*, p. 111

³⁶ *Apud* Sonya A. Quitslund, *Beauduin: A Prophet Vindicated*, Newman Press: 1973, p. x

³⁷ The same derisive attitude was shared and expressed by Beauduin’s contemporary and fellow Benedictine at Mont-César, Dom Bernard Botte OSB in *Le Mouvement Liturgique. Témoignage et souvenirs*, Paris, 1973, p. 25

³⁸ “*série de prescriptions minutieuses et arbitraires, imposées, croirait-on, pour exercer la patience de ceux qui les étudient et les accomplissent*”. *Apud* Jacques Mortiau, Raymond Loonbeek and Enzo Bianchi, *Don Lambert Beauduin Visionnaire et Précurseur: un moine au coeur libre*, Paris: Cerf, 2005, pp. 22-23.

³⁹ L. Beauduin, *Les Questions Liturgiques*, Vol. 4, 1913-14, pp. 99-100

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Apud* Jacques Mortiau, *op. cit.*, p. 53

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 53

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 51

⁴⁴ L. Beauduin letter to Roger Poelman, 27 January 1935, Archives of Amay-Chevetogne, in Raymond Loonbeek and Jacques Mortiau, *Un Pionnier, Dom Lambert Beauduin (1873- 1960): Liturgie et Unité des Chrétiens*, 2 volumes, Louvain-la-Neuve, Collège Érasme: Éditions de Chevetogne, 2001, Vol. 1, p. 121: “*le culte de la sainte Réserve, n’est pas une institution divine...le Christ aurait pu dire: adorez ceci en dehors de l’action en mémoire de moi... Il ne l’a pas fait*”.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*: “*Les adoreurs de la sainte Réserve, en dehors de l’action eucharistique ont alimenté la piété individuelle au détriment de l’unité collective de l’Eucharistie*”.

⁴⁶ L. Beauduin, letter to Fr Raoul Bonnin, 15 June 1936, Archives of Amay-Chevetogne, Loonbeek, *op. cit.*, p. 122: “*c’est une vraie hérésie que ce culte du Dieu du Tabernacle*” “*Sans doute, Notre Seigneur est infiniment adorable, mais il n’est pas venu pour se faire adorer, mais pour adorer avec nous et pour nous le Père*”.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*: “*Sans doute, Notre Seigneur est infiniment adorable, mais il n’est pas venu pour se faire adorer, mais pour adorer avec nous et pour nous le Père*”. (Here we must note the idiomatic use of “*sans doute*” (no doubt) to express probability, not certainty).

⁴⁸ L. Beauduin, ‘*Le Viatique*’, *La Maison-Dieu*, No.15, 1948, p. 126: “*On adore la Sainte Réserve parce qu’on doit la conserver; mais on ne la conserve pas parce qu’on doit l’adorer*”.

⁴⁹ With the introduction of universal male suffrage in 1894, some Catholic priests like Beauduin’s mentor, Fr Antoine Pottier in Liège, involved themselves in mass politics and tried to recruit the support of the newly enfranchised workers in the class struggle.

⁵⁰ Louis Bouyer, *Dom Lambert Beauduin: Un homme d’Eglise*, Tournai: Casterman, 1964, p. 16

⁵¹ Jean-Louis Jadoulle, ‘*Question sociale et politique pontificale. L’itinéraire d’un démocrate chrétien : Antoine Pottier (1849-1923)*’, *Revue Belge de Philologie et d’Histoire*, Vol. 69, No. 2, 1991, p. 318. It is also clear that Fr Pottier adhered to the Socialist view that workers had a right to an equal share in the profits made by their employers, (*ibid.*, pp. 310-11) and that wages should be set by the State.

⁵² Keith Pecklers SJ, *The Unread Vision: Liturgical Movement in the United States of America, 1926-55*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998, p. 9

⁵³ L. Beauduin, *La Piété de l’Église*, Louvain: Mont-César, 1914, p. 60: “*Tout enfant de l’Eglise est un saint en formation. Aussi cette piété n’est-elle pas exclusivement réservée à une aristocratie*

ascétique et placée en dehors de la portée des chrétiens ordinaires”.

⁵⁴ L. Beauduin, ‘Normes Pratiques pour les Réformes Liturgiques’, *La Maison-Dieu*, No. 1, January 1945, p. 9

⁵⁵ L. Bouyer, *op. cit.*, p. 31

⁵⁶ Dom Thaddée Barnas OSB, ‘Paul Couturier and the Monastery of Amay-Chevetogne’ in Mark Woodruff (ed.), *The Unity of Christians: the Vision of Paul Couturier*, The Catholic League, 2003, p. 3

⁵⁷ L. Beauduin, *La Piété de l’Église*, pp. 60-61: “Tous, indistinctement, depuis le Pape jusqu’à l’enfant du catéchisme, vivent la même liturgie à des degrés divers, participent aux mêmes fêtes, sont entraînés dans le même cycle. On voit quelle puissance d’entraînement cette unification des esprits et des cœurs crée dans la sainte Église”.

⁵⁸ L. Beauduin, *Les Questions Liturgiques et Paroissiales*, Louvain: Mont-César, Vol. 6, 1921, p. 82

⁵⁹ L. Beauduin, *La Piété de l’Église: principes et faits*, Louvain: Mont-César, 1914; V. Michel, *Liturgy the Life of the Church*, Liturgical Press: Collegeville, 1926

⁶⁰ “le peuple chrétien ne puise plus dans la liturgie l’expression authentique de son adoration”

⁶¹ L. Beauduin, ‘Normes Pratiques pour les Réformes Liturgiques’, *La Maison-Dieu*, No. 1, January 1945, p. 9: according to his statement in French, the liturgy was “si peu adaptée aux exigences psychologiques de nos fidèles...au XX^e siècle” because it contained “tant d’éléments archaïques, démodés, stylisés; tant d’organes atrophiés, privés de tout dynamisme, sans prise sur l’âme contemporaine: résidus vénérables d’une grande réalité passée; pièces de musée, sans voix et sans vie! Et tout conspire à nous donner cette impression: symboles effacés, formules vieilles, gestes hiératiques, langue étrangère; les baptisés sont à l’église comme des étrangers dans un pays dont ils ne connaissent ni les coutumes ni la langue”... cette écorce desséchée des réalités surnaturelles très riches, qui furent jadis palpitantes de foi et de vie; tout un ensemble de choses pleines de vertu et de rayonnement, qui nous paraissent aujourd’hui momifiées, et qui alimentaient jadis la piété du peuple chrétien.

⁶² Paul Doncoeur SJ, ‘Cinquante Années de Renaissance Liturgique (1903-1953)’, *La Maison-Dieu*, No. 40bis, 1954, p. 138. Although Fr Doncoeur did not mention Beauduin by name, but referred to him as “une voix bénédictine, autorisée entre toutes” (a Benedictine voice of the greatest authority), his identity can be discerned from the reference (with page number for the quote) to the article written by Beauduin in the first issue of *La Maison-Dieu*.

⁶³ Jacques Mortiau, Raymond Loonbeek, *Don Lambert Beauduin Visionnaire et Précurseur: un moine au coeur libre*, Paris: Cerf, 2005, p. 32

⁶⁴ A retable is a structure behind the altar consisting of a frame enclosing decorated panels or a shelf holding candlesticks, flower vases or statues.

⁶⁵ Jacques Mortiau, *ibid.*, p. 33

⁶⁶ Beauduin’s views on concelebration were published in *Les Questions Liturgiques et Paroissiales*, Vol. 7, 1922, pp. 275-285 and Vol. 8, 1923, pp. 23-34. He read a paper on concelebration at the Eucharistic Congress in 1924 in Amsterdam, as verified by A. G. Hebert SSM, ‘Concelebration’, *Theology*, Vol. 22, 1 February 1931, p. 64.

⁶⁷ L. Beauduin, ‘Normes Pratiques pour les Réformes Liturgiques’, p. 10: “appauvrissement actuel et dynamisme évangélique antique”

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10, “appauvri et déformé le culte si vivant des âges de foi”

⁶⁹ E. Dickinson, *Music in the History of the Western Church*, C. Scribner’s Sons, New York, 1925, p. 48

⁷⁰ L. Beauduin, *op. cit.*, p. 10: “il faut rénover, rajeunir, populariser, restaurer, s’affranchir prudemment de la discipline trop étreinte des règles liturgiques actuelles et rendre aux signes sacramentels et aux institutions chrétiennes toute leur vertu et leur efficacité”.

⁷¹ L. Beauduin, *Liturgy the Life of the Church*, trans. Virgil Michel, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1926, p. 8

⁷² A. Bugnini, *La Riforma Liturgica 1948-1975*, published in 1983, and in English translation by the Liturgical Press in 1990

⁷³ L. Beauduin, *La piété de l’Église*, Mont-César, 1914, p. 18: “Le peuple a froid dans nos églises; il s’y ennue ; y vient par corvée, a hâte d’en sortir; tout, dans son attitude, dénote que son âme est ailleurs; il ne prie plus”.

⁷⁴ T. E. Bridgett, *Ritual of the New Testament*, London: Burns and Oates, 1887, p. 165

⁷⁵ T. E. Bridgett, *op. cit.*, p. 114

⁷⁶ ‘Notes et Informations’, *Les Questions Liturgiques et Paroissiales*, Vol. 8, 1923, p. 67

⁷⁷ B. Botte, *Le Mouvement Liturgique: Témoignage et souvenirs*, Paris: Desclée, 1973, p. 27

⁷⁸ Mgr Battifol’s work, *L’Eucharistie, la présence réelle et la transsubstantiation* (The Eucharist, the Real Presence and Transubstantiation), was placed on the Index in 1907, and Mgr Duchesne’s *Histoire Ancienne de l’Église* (Early History of the Church) in 1912.

⁷⁹ Rev. J. Van der Heyden, (Louvain Correspondent), ‘Noted Liturgists of World Meet at Antwerp Congress’, *National Catholic Welfare Conference News Service*, 11 August 1930

⁸⁰ J. Van der Heyden, *op. cit.*

⁸¹ Beauduin outlined this stratagem in the first issue of *La Maison-Dieu*, January 1945, p. 22

⁸² L. Bouyer, *Dom Lambert Beauduin: un homme d’Église*, Paris, Casterman, 1964, p. 45: “Plus d’un lecteur dut se frotter les yeux et se demander où et quand Pie X avait entrepris la rénovation en question. Dom Lambert, dès lors, avait mis la main sur la fameuse phrase du motu proprio, à laquelle il allait faire une inlassable propagande et dont plus d’un ecclésiastique grincheux ne se gênerait pas pour dire qu’il en avait tiré son mouvement liturgique comme un prestidigitateur tire un lapin d’un chapeau”.

⁸³ L. Beauduin, *La Piété de l’Église: principes et faits*, Louvain, Monastery of Mont César, 1914, edited and published in English translation by Dom Virgil Michel as *Liturgy the Life of the Church*, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1926

⁸⁴ Lambert Beauduin, *La piété de l’Église*, pp. 14-15

⁸⁵ L. Beauduin, ‘La Vraie Piété de l’Église, Rapport au Congrès de Malines 1909’, *Les Questions Liturgiques et Paroissiales*, 40, 1959, p. 221: “Ainsi tous les fidèles seront amenés à renoncer pendant les offices divins à la récitation de prières privées”.

⁸⁶ “la liturgie a une place hors de pair, que les exercices ne peuvent usurper”. *Apud* André Haquin, ‘La Préparation du mouvement liturgique de 1909--Dom Lambert Beauduin et l’Abbaye du Mont-César’, *Les Questions Liturgiques et Paroissiales*, XLVII, 1966, p. 238

⁸⁷ Pierre Jean Baptiste de Herdt, *Sacra Liturgiae Praxis*, 3 volumes, Louvain: Vanlinthout, 1894, Vol. 1, p. 134

⁸⁸ L. Beauduin, *Les Questions Liturgiques et Paroissiales*, Louvain: Mont-César, 1922, p. 50: “ils ne s’associent pas à la prière, au sacrifice”... “on n’est qu’un catholique distant, un isolé, un solitaire, un catholique étranger... un catholique qui ne s’additionne pas, qui ne s’occupe que de soi, qui n’a aucun souci du bien général, aucune préoccupation d’édification et d’apostolat”.

⁸⁹ AAS 50, 1958, §31, p. 642: “plenior modus obtinetur, cum fideles sacerdotes celebranti **liturgice respondent**, quasi cum illo « dialogando », et **partes sibi proprias clara voce dicendo**”. (a fuller method [of participating] is achieved when the faithful **respond liturgically** to the priest, as if

“dialoguing” with him, and **by saying the parts that pertain to them in a clearly audible voice**”). [emphases in the original]

⁹⁰ L. Beauduin, *La piété de l'Église*, Mont-César, 1914, p. 14: “la liturgie ainsi pratiquée réveillera insensiblement une foi endormie et mettra en valeur, dans la prière et l'action, les énergies latentes des âmes baptisées: ‘le véritable esprit chrétien refleurira et se maintiendra parmi les fidèles’ (Pie X)”.

⁹¹ L. Beauduin, *Les Questions Liturgiques et Paroissiales*, Louvain: Mont-César, 1922, pp. 51-52

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 52: “Le prêtre parle au peuple, et ce n'est pas l'enfant de chœur; c'est le peuple qui devrait répondre”.

⁹³ See P. Guéranger, *Institutions Liturgiques*, Vol. 2, 1841, Paris, pp. 181-182

⁹⁴ *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 14, 4 August 1922, p. 505

⁹⁵ L. Beauduin, *Les Questions Liturgiques et Paroissiales*, Vol. VII, 1922, p. 224: “l'introduction des messes dialoguées est contraire à la tradition”:

⁹⁶ L. Beauduin, ‘Encore la Messe Dialoguée’ (More on the Dialogue Mass), *Questions Liturgiques et Paroissiales*, Vol. 7, 1922, pp. 223-224

⁹⁷ A. Fortescue, *Ceremonies of the Roman Rite Described*, 1920, London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, p. 78, Footnote 2

⁹⁸ At the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore (1884), they demanded that “the major part at least of the faithful will learn to chant with clergy and choir in the Vesper service and suchlike”. *Acta et Decreti Concilii Plenarii Baltimorensis*, Baltimore, John Murphy and Co., 1886, No. 119

⁹⁹ Pierre Combe, *Justine Ward and Solesmes*, The Catholic University of America Press, 1992, p. 5

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 95

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 396

¹⁰² Archbishop (later Cardinal) Gibbons, who presided over the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, was an enthusiastic promoter of congregational singing and wrote extensively on its alleged benefits in *The Ambassador of Christ*, Baltimore, J. Murphy and Co., 1896, pp. 354-5

¹⁰³ *New York Times*, 12 May 1904

¹⁰⁴ *The Baltimore Sun*, 10 March 1907, in *Church Music: A Magazine for the Clergy, Choirmaster and Organists*, Vol. 4, n. 6, 1909, Philadelphia, *American Ecclesiastical Review*, p. 298

¹⁰⁵ Justine B. Ward, ‘Twenty-five Years: Authority and Obedience’, *American Ecclesiastical Review*, 78, 1928, p. 506

¹⁰⁶ *Apud* T. L. Bouscaren, *The Canon Law Digest*, Vol. II, 1933-1942, Bruce, 1943, pp. 198-200

¹⁰⁷ Pope Pius X, *motu proprio*, 1903, § 12: “*Praeter melodias celebrantis ad altare et ministrorum, quae cantu gregoriano semper cani debent sine organi sequentia, quae cantus liturgici extant sunt Chori Levitarum*”. (Apart from the singing of the celebrant at the altar and of his ministers, which must always be sung in Gregorian chant and without accompaniment of the organ, what remains of the liturgical chant belongs to the choir of Levites).

¹⁰⁸ Pope Pius X, *motu proprio*, 1903, § 21: “In processions outside the church the Ordinary may give permission for a band ...to accompany some spiritual canticle sung in Latin or in the vernacular by the singers and the pious associations which take part in the procession”. Also, lay people were permitted to sing hymns in any language inside the church at non-liturgical ceremonies such as novenas, sodalities, Stations of the Cross etc.

¹⁰⁹ A. Laveille, *A Life of Cardinal Mercier*, trans. Arthur Livingstone, The Century Co., New York: 1928, p. 141

¹¹⁰ John de Luca, 'Disharmony among bishops: on the binding nature of a papal *motu proprio* on music', *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol. 35, 2014, pp. 28-37

¹¹¹ Errol Lea-Scarlett, 'Music, Choir and Organ', in Patrick O'Farrell (ed.), *St Mary's Cathedral Sydney, 1821-1971*, Surry Hills: Devonshire Press, 1971, p.179

¹¹² John de Luca, *op. cit.*, p. 36

¹¹³ L. Beauduin, *Questions Liturgiques et Paroissiales*, Louvain: Abbey of Mont César, 1922, pp. 50 and 52

¹¹⁴ *Osservatore Romano*, 4 December 1969

¹¹⁵ Pope Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*, 1974, §§31 and 48

¹¹⁶ Alcuin Reid, *The Organic Development of the Liturgy*, Ignatius Press, 2005, p. 127

¹¹⁷ This applies especially to the work of Fr Pius Parsch in Vienna and Fr Romano Guardini in Bavaria who overtook Beauduin's leadership in this field.

¹¹⁸ As director of the German youth movement, Quickborn, which operated at Burg Rothenfels, a castle near the River Main, he pursued the most radical liturgical reforms. He became one of Pope Benedict XVI's favourite theologians.

¹¹⁹ Robert Tuzic, ed., *How Firm a Foundation: Leaders of the Liturgical Movement*, Chicago, 1990, p. 48

¹²⁰ Mgr Georges Roche, *Pie XII Devant l'Histoire*, Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 1972, p. 52

¹²¹ Then, still in the reign of Pius XII, he was appointed Consultor to the Sacred Congregation of Rites (1956), and to Professor of Sacred Liturgy in the Lateran University (1957).

¹²² Address of Pope Pius XII to the International Congress on Pastoral Liturgy held at Assisi, September 22, 1956. See *Acta Apostolici Sedis*, 29 October 1956, p. 712 and *Osservatore Romano*, 24 September 1956.

¹²³ He urged that "the whole congregation, in accordance with the rules of the liturgy, either answer the priest in an orderly and fitting manner, or sing hymns suitable to the different parts of the Mass, or do both" (*Mediator Dei* § 105).

¹²⁴ Address of Pope Pius XII given to the International Congress on Pastoral Liturgy at Assisi in 1956.

¹²⁵ A. Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy (1948-75)*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990, p. 6

¹²⁶ A. Bugnini, *op. cit.*, p. 7, Note 5

¹²⁷ The Praetorian Guard was an elite corps of soldiers chosen from among the most experienced and trustworthy troops to act as the Roman Emperor's bodyguard.

¹²⁸ *Catalogue des Maisons et du Personnel de la Congregation de la Mission 1947*, The Institutional Repository at DePaul University, "V1947" (1947). Personnel Catalogues, 86, p. 73 http://via.library.depaul.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1071&context=per_cat

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 73. Fr Francesco Bossarelli CM is also mentioned on p. 73 as a "Consultor".

¹³⁰ *Apud* John F. Zimmerman, CM 'Recollections of Father Slattery: The Years of His Generalate 1947-1968', *Vincentian Heritage Journal*, Vol. 4, issue 1, 1983, pp. 49-50 <http://via.library.depaul.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1019&context=vhj> The special Commission insisted that the burden of repayment to the Holy See should fall on the entire Vincentian community around the world. To satisfy the Pontifical Commission, the Order's Motherhouse in Paris asked the American Provinces to arrange for loans of the essential money because no other Provinces could raise the required funds in the aftermath of the war. It was not until 1966 that the debt was fully paid.

¹³¹ Frs P. Duployé and A-M. Roguet. Its mission was to promote the Liturgical Movement by organizing conferences, encouraging research and publishing liturgical studies in its magazine, *La*

Maison-Dieu, which was produced by the Dominican publishing house, Editions du Cerf.

¹³² In addition to the term Vincentians, priests of the Congregation of the Mission were sometimes called Lazarists after the *Maison St Lazare* in Paris where St Vincent de Paul had lived and worked.

¹³³ P. Duployé, *Les origines du CPL*, Mulhouse: Salvator, 1968, p. 308. Forty religious superiors and seminary rectors were assembled there under the chairmanship of Mgr Harscouët, Bishop of Chartres, a supporter of Beauduin since 1909. Among the speakers were Fr Daniel Perrot, Rector of the Seminary of the Mission de France for worker-priests, Fr Pie Régamey, OP, editor of the review *L'Art Sacré* who advocated a minimalist style of church decoration, Fr Yves Congar OP, a Modernist theologian and pioneer of ecumenism, Fr A-G Martimort, a convener of *CPL* events and future drafter of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the above-mentioned Fr Duployé OP and the ubiquitous Beauduin.

¹³⁴ After the death of the last Secretary of State in 1944, Pius XII did not appoint a successor, but gave Mgr Montini the role of “Substitute” and later “Pro-Secretary of State”. This does not mean that Montini was a minor functionary; he was responsible for both the Church’s external relations with other countries and the internal relations among the various other offices of the Church. In his capacity, he had discretion as to who should see the Pope, what information reached him and which persons should be considered for appointment to Vatican posts.

¹³⁵ The text of the telegram can be read in the *CPL*’s Review *Maison-Dieu*, n. 9, 1947, p. 3

¹³⁶ P. Duployé *apud* Denis Crouan, *The History and the Future of the Roman Liturgy*, Ignatius Press, 2005, p. 136

¹³⁷ A. Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948-75*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990, p. 42

¹³⁸ Interestingly, Pope Paul VI perpetuated the same myth when he stated in his Apostolic Constitution *Missale Romanum* of 3 April 1969 that the *Novus Ordo* and the liturgical reform resulting from Vatican II were a continuation of the developments of previous centuries, including the Council of Trent.

¹³⁹ A. Bugnini, *op.cit.*, p. 283

¹⁴⁰ A. Bugnini, ‘*Per una Riforma Liturgica Generale*’, *Ephemerides Liturgicae*, March 1949

¹⁴¹ Also in the reign of Pius XII, he was appointed Professor in the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music in 1955, Consultor to the Sacred Congregation of Rites in 1956, and Professor of Sacred Liturgy in the Lateran University in 1957

¹⁴² Bugnini stated: “*la riforma dev’essere concepita come un ritorno alla tradizione primitiva della celebrazione del mistero cristiano piuttosto che come un compromesso tra questa celebrazione in sottordine e le superfetazioni devozionali che l’hanno disarticolata nel corso dei secoli*”. (The reform must be considered as a return to the early Christian mystery rather than a compromise between this inferior sort of celebration and the devotional accretions that have disrupted it over the centuries).

¹⁴³ Hubert Jedin, *History of the Church*, London: Burns and Oates, 1981, Vol. 10, p. 303

¹⁴⁴ The singing of hymns in the vernacular during solemn Mass had been expressly forbidden by Pope Leo XIII in the General Decree of the Congregation of Rites, 22 May 1894.

Pope Pius X stated: “The language proper to the Roman Church is Latin. Hence it is forbidden to sing anything whatever in the vernacular in solemn liturgical functions” (*Tra le Sollecitudini*, 1903, §7).

The prescriptions of the *Motu proprio* of St Pius X have been confirmed also by the 1917 *Codex Juris Canonici*. Canon 2 prescribes: “All liturgical laws are still in force”. (*Omnes liturgicae leges vim suam retinent*); Canon 1264, No.1: “Liturgical laws pertaining to sacred music must be observed”, (*Leges liturgicae circa musicam sacram servantur*).

¹⁴⁵ See Fr Max Kassiepe OMI, *Irrwege und Umwege im Frömmigkeitsleben der Gegenwart*, (Wrong Turns and Detours in Contemporary Spiritual Life), Kevelaer, Vol. 1 (1939) Vol. 2 (1940). Fr

Kassiepe specifically mentioned changes to the *Confiteor* and *Agnus Dei*, the Easter Vigil held on Saturday night, priests who used German in the liturgy for the *Missa Cantata* and the *Missa Recitata* and unjust criticism of the faithful who recited the Rosary or made the Stations of the Cross.

See also Fr August Dörner, *Sentire cum Ecclesia . Ein dringender Aufruf und Weckruf an Priester* (Thinking with the Church: An Urgent Wake-up Call to Priests), Kühlen, Mönchengladbach, 1941

¹⁴⁶ *Apud* William Dych, *Karl Rahner*, New York: Continuum-3PL, 2000, p. 9

¹⁴⁷ 'Lettre de Romano Guardini à S. Exc. Mgr Evêque de Mayence', *La Maison-Dieu*, No. 3, 1945, pp. 7-25

¹⁴⁸ Vernacular versions of the Ritual were permitted by the Vatican in Germany (1943 and 1950), France (1946 and 1947), the USA (1954), and Liège (1948). In 1949, permission was granted to China for the Mass in Chinese. In 1950, India received permission to use Hindi for the celebration of the Sacraments.

¹⁴⁹ *Apud* Denis Crouan, *The History and the Future of the Roman Liturgy*, Ignatius Press, 2005, p. 136

¹⁵⁰ 1 Corinthians 14:8: "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?"

¹⁵¹ *Mediator Dei* § 4

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, § 7

¹⁵³ The reference is to the massive 16th-century Italian sculpture known as the *Colosso dell'Appennino* or the *Apennine Colossus* created by the artist, Giambologna. The giant statue sits brooding over a pool, staring into its murky depths like a malevolent spirit. Its body contains a number of interconnecting chambers while inside its head there is a sort of fireplace which, when lighted, emits billows of smoke from its nose.

¹⁵⁴ Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution *Missale Romanum*, 3 April 1969

¹⁵⁵ *Apud* Rembert G. Weakland, *A Pilgrim in a Pilgrim Church: Memoirs of a Catholic Archbishop*, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009, pp. 127-128

¹⁵⁶ A. Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy: 1948-1975*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990, p. 11

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25

¹⁵⁸ *De solemni vigilia paschali instauranda*, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 9 February 1951, p. 129. Bugnini was mistaken when he said that the publication date was the beginning of March 1951.

¹⁵⁹ *Apud* Anscar Chapungco OSB, *What, Then, Is Liturgy? Musings and Memoir*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2010, p. 4. Fr Chapungco, former President of the Pontifical Liturgical Institute in Rome and avid defender of the reforms, recalled that Bugnini spoke these words during one of his visits to the Institute.

¹⁶⁰ L. Gromier, 'La Semaine Sainte Restaurée', in *Opus Dei*, 1962, n. 2, pp. 76-90. *Opus Dei* was a monthly journal edited by a French priest, Fr Ferdinand Portier who was known for his arrangement and promotion of Gregorian Chant.

¹⁶¹ These included Mgr Felice Bonomini, Bishop of Como, Cardinal Siri, Archbishop of Genoa, and Mgr Cornelio Cuccarollo, Archbishop of Otranto. *Apud* Alcuin Reid, *The Organic Development of the Liturgy*, Ignatius Press, 2005, p 222, Note 270

¹⁶² Alcuin Reid, *ibid.*, p. 231

¹⁶³ See, for example, *The Catholic Herald* and *The Tablet*.

¹⁶⁴ Writing in *The Spectator* in 1962, Waugh stated: "During the last few years we have experienced the triumph of the 'liturgists' in the new arrangement of the services for the end of Holy Week and for Easter. For centuries these had been enriched by devotions which were dear to the laity – the anticipation of the morning office of *Tenebrae*, the vigil at the Altar of Repose, the Mass of the

Presanctified. It was not how the Christians of the second century observed the season. It was the organic growth of the needs of the people". In Scott Reid, ed., *A Bitter Trial: Evelyn Waugh and John Carmel Cardinal Heenan on the liturgical changes*, London: St Austin Press, 1996, pp. 24-25

¹⁶⁵ Sacred Congregation of Rites, General Decree and Instruction, *Maxima Redemptionis* 16 Nov. 1955, *AAS*, Vol. 47, p. 840

¹⁶⁶ This claim was made by the Prefect of the Congregation of Rites, Cardinal Gaetano Cicognani.

¹⁶⁷ *Mediator Dei*, §109

¹⁶⁸ The members of the Commission in 1948 were: Cardinal Clemente Micara, Pro-Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites (President); Fr Annibale Bugnini CM (Secretary); Msgr. Alfonso Carinci, Secretary of the Congregation of Rites; Fr. Augustin Bea SJ; Fr Ferdinando Antonelli OFM; Fr. Joseph Löw CSSR; Dom Anselmo Albareda OSB, Prefect of the Vatican Library.

¹⁶⁹ A. Bugnini, *The Simplification of the Rubrics: Spirit and Practical Consequences of the Decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites March 23, 1955*, with a Preface by Ferdinando Antonelli, Doyle and Finegan, Collegeville: 1955

¹⁷⁰ Nicola Giampietro, *The Development of the Liturgical Reform: As Seen by Cardinal Ferdinando Antonelli from 1948-1970*, Fort Collins CO: Roman Catholic Books, 2009, p. 69. Giampietro gleaned his information from research into Antonelli's personal writings as well as archival material from the minutes of the Commissions on which the Cardinal had served.

¹⁷¹ F. Antonelli, *La Maison-Dieu*, No. 47-48, 1956, p. 231

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 192. This is not to suggest that Cardinal Antonelli wanted to preserve intact the Church's liturgical tradition. He was Secretary for the Liturgical Commission of the Second Vatican Council, a member of the post-conciliar *Consilium* and became Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for Rites in 1965.

¹⁷³ A. Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948-75*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990, p. 6

¹⁷⁴ A. Bugnini, *op. cit.*

¹⁷⁵ L. Beauduin, 'Le Décret du 9 Février 1951 et les Espoirs qu'il Suscite' (The Decree of 9 February 1951 and the hopes it has raised), *La Maison-Dieu*, No. 26, April 1951, p. 103

¹⁷⁶ Herbert McCabe OP, 'The Easter Vigil: the mystery of new life', *God Matters*, Continuum, 2005, p. 103

¹⁷⁷ Nicholas Wiseman, *Four lectures on the offices and ceremonies of Holy Week, as performed in the Papal chapels delivered in Rome in the Lent of MDCCCXXVII*, C. Dolman: London,

¹⁷⁸ This also applies to expressions such as "this night" and "this blessed night" which are reiterated in the text.

¹⁷⁹ *Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts*, (Protocol No 120/88), published by the Congregation for Divine Worship 20 February 1988

¹⁸⁰ Pius Parsch, *The Church's Year of Grace, Volume II: Septuagesima to Holy Saturday*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1962, pp. 337-338

¹⁸¹ *De Facultativa Celebratione Instauratae Vigiliae Paschalis*, Sacred Congregation of Rites, 11 January 1952 *AAS*, p. 49

¹⁸² *Apud* Alcuin Reid, *The Organic Development of the Liturgy*, Ignatius Press, 2005, p. 181

¹⁸³ 'Liturgical Briefs', *Worship*, 26, No. 7, 1951-1952, p. 374

¹⁸⁴ SCR, *De Facultativa Celebratione Instauratae Vigiliae Paschalis*, 11 January 1952 *AAS*, p. 49

¹⁸⁵ In George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, an "unperson" is someone who has been "vaporized". It commonly refers to a public figure, especially in a totalitarian country who, for political or

ideological reasons, is not recognized or mentioned in government publications or records or in the news media.

¹⁸⁶ *De Facultativa Celebratione Instauratae Vigiliae Paschalis*, Sacred Congregation of Rites, 11 January 1952 AAS, p. 49: “*Sanctissimus autem Dominus Noster Pius Papa XII mandavit, ut peculiaris illa virorum peritorum Commissio, quae vigiliae paschalis ritum paraverat, praefatas relationes accurato examini subiceret*”. (Our most holy Lord Pope Pius XII ordered that the same special Commission of experts who had prepared the rite of the Pascal Vigil should carefully examine the aforementioned reports).

¹⁸⁷ A. Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy: 1948-1975*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990, p. 10

¹⁸⁸ The pejorative expression “Potemkin façade” comes from the 18th-century Russian Minister, Gregory Potemkin, a favorite of Empress Catherine II. When Catherine decided to visit the Crimea in 1787 to inspect that part of her Empire, Potemkin allegedly erected fake settlements along the banks of the Dnieper River so that she would think the poverty-stricken area was a prosperous and thriving place. He is also said to have provided crowds of waving and cheering peasants to impress the Empress as she cruised down the river. The expression is now used, especially in politics and economics, to describe any construction (literal or figurative) built to hide an adverse fact or situation.

¹⁸⁹ The Church of the Immaculate Conception at Farm Street, Mayfair, in London has been run by the Jesuits since its establishment in the 1840s. In pre-Vatican II times, it was famous for its phenomenal success in making many thousands of converts to the Church.

¹⁹⁰ Established in the mid 19th century, the London Oratory was the largest church in London before the building of Westminster Cathedral.

¹⁹¹ *The Tablet*, 16 April 1898

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 14 April 1917

¹⁹³ ‘Holy Week at Westminster Cathedral’, *The Tablet*, 2 April 1911

¹⁹⁴ ‘Easter in the Churches’, *The Tablet*, 10 April 1920

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ Translated from ‘Reise nach Sizilien’ (Voyage in Sicily) in Romano Guardini, *Spiegel und Gleichnis. Bilder und Gedanken* (Mirror and Parable: Images and Thoughts), Grünewald-Schöningh: Mainz-Paderborn, 1990, pp. 158-161

¹⁹⁸ Evelyn Waugh, Letter to the *Catholic Herald*, 19 August 1964 *apud* Scott Reid, *A Bitter Trial*, St Austin Press, 2000, p. 40

¹⁹⁹ Fr John Coyne, ‘The Traditional Position’, in Charles Cunliffe (ed.), *English in the Liturgy: A Symposium*, Templegate, 1956, p. 97

²⁰⁰ Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, *Paschale solemnitas: On Preparing and Celebrating the Paschal Feasts*, 16 January 1988, §3

²⁰¹ Fr Ferdinando Antonelli, *Osservatore Romano*, November 1955

²⁰² Fr Dennis Geaney OSA, ‘Guarded Enthusiasm’, *Worship*, Vol. 33, No. 7, 1959, p. 419

²⁰³ L. Beauduin, *La Piété de l'Eglise*, Louvain: Abbey of Mont-César, 1914 (published in English translation by Dom Virgil Michel under the title of *Liturgy the Life of the Church*, Collegeville, 1926)

²⁰⁴ Keith Pecklers SJ, *The Unread Vision: The Liturgical Movement in the United States of America, 1926-1955*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998, p. 41

²⁰⁵ Nicholas Wiseman, *Essays on Various Subjects*, London: C. Dolman, 1853, 3 vols., Vol. 1, p. 427

²⁰⁶ William Busch, 'Letter to the Editor', *Commonweal*, 1925, quoted in Kathleen Hughes (ed.), *How Firm a Foundation: Voices of the Early Liturgical Movement*, Chicago, Vol. 1, Liturgy Training Publications, 1990

²⁰⁷ William Busch, 'The Liturgy: A School of Catholic Action', *Orate Fratres*, No. 7, 1933, p. 11

²⁰⁸ H.A.R., *The Autobiography of Father Reinhold*, Herder and Herder, New York, 1968, p. 124

²⁰⁹ Louis Bouyer, *Liturgical Piety*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1955, pp. 248-249

²¹⁰ Yves Congar OP, *Report from Rome: On the First Session of the Vatican Council*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1963, p. 49

²¹¹ Marcel Metzger, *History of the Liturgy: The Major Stages*, Liturgical Press, 1997, p. 135. The same author states: "Vatican II has restored the teaching of the liturgy in the formation of the clergy. We must recognize that this teaching was not given in a satisfactory way prior to the Council". (*ibid.*, p. 136)

²¹² Joseph Jungmann SJ, 'The Constitution on the Liturgy' in Herbert Vorgrimler (ed.), *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Vol. I, New York: Herder & Herder/London: Burns & Oates, 1967, p. 17

²¹³ *Mediator Dei*, 1947 §§ 173-185

²¹⁴ 'Holy Week in Rome', *The Tablet*, 22 April 1911

²¹⁵ The governing body of the Republic of Venice

²¹⁶ 'Holy Week and Easter in St Mark's, Venice, in the Eighteenth Century', *The Tablet*, 8 April 1911

²¹⁷ AAS, 1955, *Instructio De Ordine Hebdomadae Sanctae Instaurato Rite Peragendo*, p. 847

²¹⁸ 29 Jul 1957 Sacred Congregation of Rites, Historical Section, *Memoria*, supplement IV, Consultation of the Episcopate concerning a reform of the Roman Breviary: Results and Conclusions, p. 36, in Thomas Richstatter OFM, *Liturgical Law. New Style, New Spirit*, Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977, p. 40

²¹⁹ 29 Jul 1957 Sacred Congregation of Rites, Historical Section, *Memoria*, pp. 101-2, in Thomas Richstatter, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 39

²²¹ The Rubicon was also the place where Caesar is said to have uttered the famous phrase "*alea iacta est*" (the die is cast), meaning that the situation he created was irreversible.

²²² The most well known were Virgil Michel's *Orate Fratres* (renamed in 1951 as *Worship*) published at St John's Benedictine Abbey, Minnesota, Bugnini's *Ephemerides Liturgicae* published in Rome and *La Maison-Dieu* published by Editions du Cerf for the *Centre de Pastorale Liturgique* in Paris.

²²³ This altogether staggering suggestion to overhaul the Roman Canon, hitherto considered for 15 centuries so sacred as to be untouchable, was not recorded in the original published conclusions of the Maria Laach Congress. But it was recorded by one of the participants, Dom Bernard Botte OSB, in his memoirs: *Le Mouvement Liturgique: Témoignage et Souvenirs*, Paris: Desclée et Compagnie, 1973, pp. 80-81. Here he stated that a resolution to make significant changes to the Canon was part of a talk given by Fr Josef Jungmann SJ.

²²⁴ 'Conclusions of the First International Congress of liturgical studies held at Maria Laach in 1951: Problems of the Roman Missal', *La Maison-Dieu*, No. 37, 1954, pp. 129-131

²²⁵ 'Conclusions of the Second International Congress of liturgical studies held at Sainte-Odile in 1952: Problems of the Roman Missal', *La Maison-Dieu*, No. 37, 1954, pp. 132-133

²²⁶ ‘Conclusions of the Third Congress, Lugano, 1953’, *Worship*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, Vol. 28, February 1954, p. 162. Vernacular singing at a sung Mass had been expressly forbidden by both Leo XIII and Pius X.

²²⁷ *La Maison-Dieu*, No. 37, 1954, p. 3. The message read: “*Nous accompagnons de Nos vœux les travaux de cette savante assemblée et Nous accordons de tout cœur à tous et à chacun des participants la Bénédiction Apostolique*”. (Our good wishes go with the proceedings of this scholarly assembly and We warmly extend Our Apostolic Blessing to each and every one of the participants).

²²⁸ This was noted by the progressive liturgist, Fr H. A. Reinhold, who was present at the Congress in ‘A Turning Point: Lugano’, *Worship* 27, No. 12, 1952-53, p. 558.

²²⁹ Godfrey Diekmann OSB, ‘Louvain and Versailles’, *Worship*, Vol. 28, 1954, p. 54

²³⁰ Cardinal Gaetano Cicognani, Opening Address of the Congress

²³¹ A. Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948-75*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990, p. 11

²³² The Cardinals participating were Gaetano Cicognani, Prefect of the Congregation of Rites and President of the Preparatory Commission on the Liturgy, Augustin Bea SJ, Confessor of Pius XII and President of the Commission for Christian Unity at Vatican II, Pierre-Marie Gerlier of Lyon, a noted ecumenist and liberation theologian, Gabriel Garrone of Toulouse who helped formulate Vatican II’s *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*, and Giacomo Lercaro of Bologna who contributed an extremely radical paper on the reform of the Breviary and later became one of the four Moderators of Vatican II.

Other participants who played an active role in Vatican II were Fr (later Cardinal) Antonelli; Bishop Wilhelm van Bakkum of Ruteng, Indonesia (on adapting the liturgy to local customs and languages); Bishop Otto Spuelberg of Meissen who championed Teilhard de Chardin at Vatican II as “a great scientist”; and Fr Joseph Jungmann SJ who promoted antiquarianism and the supremacy of pastoral initiatives over objective tradition. Jungmann was later appointed relator of the sub-commission that drafted the schema on the Mass. As a *peritus* (expert) at Vatican II, he contributed in large part to the writing of the document on the liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

Two militantly reformist prelates, Bishops Edwin Vincent O’Hara of Kansas City and Albert Stohr of Mainz, contributed papers to the Assisi Congress but died before Vatican II. Nevertheless, there is every reason to believe that their destructive legacy was not without influence on the Council.

²³³ A. Bugnini, *op. cit.*, p. 11

²³⁴ ‘Assisi 1956 and Holy Week 1957’, *Worship*, Vol. 31, 1957, p. 236

²³⁵ See the encyclical *Musicae Sacrae* (Of Sacred Music), 25 December 1955, §74. The document allows female choristers on the lame excuse “where there are not enough boys” to sing in church. But how few is “not enough”? In straightened circumstances, only 3 or 4 well-trained voices would suffice, and men could always have been recruited to swell the numbers. As with the altar server debacle of the 1990s, the best way to ensure a dearth of boys in liturgical roles is to have girls perform alongside them.

²³⁶ Cardinal Gaetano Cicognani, ‘*Discours d’Ouverture*’, *La Maison-Dieu*, No. 47-8, 1956, pp. 44-45

²³⁷ A. Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy*, p. 6

²³⁸ Bugnini mentioned that only a limited number of copies of the *Memoria* were published for private circulation among a selected group whom he wished to consult. See A. Bugnini, *Reform of the Liturgy*, p. 7. Apart from the members of the Liturgical Commission, the first to receive a copy of the *Memoria* were Dom Bernard Capelle OSB, Abbot of Mont-César, Fr Josef Jungmann SJ, Professor at the University of Innsbruck and Mgr Mario Righetti, a historian of the liturgy. The *Memoria* was not published for general readership until 2003. See Carlo Braga, ed., *La Riforma*

Liturgica di Pio XII: Documenti: I. La Memoria sulla Riforma Liturgica, 1948, Rome: Edizioni Liturgiche, 2003.

²³⁹ The Pope stated: “The Congress which has just concluded was directed to this particular object, to show the inestimable value of the liturgy in the sanctification of souls and consequently in the pastoral activity of the Church”.

²⁴⁰ Cardinal Avery Dulles praised the superiority of “all that has been learned from depth psychology about the unconscious, from sociology about ideologies,..from comparative religion about the faiths of other people, and from linguistic analysis about the hazards of metaphysical discourse”. See A. Dulles, Preface to *A History of Apologetics*, London: Hutchinson, 1971, p. xviii.

²⁴¹ It was Dom Lambert Beauduin who first gave the Liturgical Movement an ecumenical goal. He founded the Monastery of Amay (later moved to Chevetogne) in 1925 for unity with the Eastern Rite Churches and proposed a theory for the Anglican Church to be “united but not absorbed” in the Catholic Church.

²⁴² It was Cardinal Mercier of Malines, Belgium, a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Louvain at the end of the 19th century, who first proposed a synthesis between humanistic psychology and Thomistic philosophy. He strongly promoted humanistic psychology as an independent “science” and worked to have it accepted in the programs of Catholic institutes of higher education.

²⁴³ Fr White was a close associate of Carl Jung, and together they planned to integrate Jung’s psychoanalytic theories into Catholic doctrine and pastoral practice. The failure of his project did nothing to dampen the enthusiasm of Catholic devotees of Jung’s theories and resulted in a flood of Jungian “New Age” spirituality at every level. This can be seen in the popularity of the Enneagram, yoga, transcendental meditation, wicca, spiritualism, druidism, encounter groups, sensitivity training etc.

²⁴⁴ Carl Gustav Jung, ‘Transformation Symbolism in the Mass’ (*Collected Works*, Vol. 11, *Psychology and Religion: West and East*, New York: Pantheon, 1958, (first published in 1940), pp. 201-298

²⁴⁵ Liturgy and Beauty: *Experiences of renewal in certain Papal Liturgical Celebrations* http://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/2004/documents/ns_lit_doc_20040202_liturgia-bellezza_en.html

²⁴⁶ The Decree on Priestly Training (*Optatam totius*) §11 specifically urges the study of “the newer findings” in the area of psychology and sociology.

²⁴⁷ Two psychologists, Carl Rogers and his associate, William Coulson, a Catholic who would later repent of his part in the affair, set up a group therapy program in the 1960s for the nuns of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and their educational establishments. Coulson admitted that he had provoked a crisis of sexual misconduct among the IHM sisters which destroyed their order. See William Coulson, ‘We overcame their traditions, we overcame their faith’, Interview in *The Latin Mass: Chronicles of a Catholic Reform*, January-February 1994.

²⁴⁸ A particularly gruesome and sadistic form of execution used for centuries in China.

²⁴⁹ Mgr Wagner was an influential figure in the post-war German Liturgical Movement. He later became a member of Pope Paul VI’s *Consilium*, and was given the task of directing the work on the new Missal. He was also one of the select few liturgists on the *Consilium* who worked directly with Bugnini. (See Piero Marini, *A Challenging Reform*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2007, p. 12) Other key collaborators on this project were the well-known liturgists Jungmann, Jounel, Gy, Wagner, Vagaggini, Gelineau, Bouyer and McManus.

²⁵⁰ This was set up in 1947 to promote liturgical reform in Germany through publications and organization of liturgical Congresses.

²⁵¹ Johannes Wagner, Postscript to Balthasar Fischer and Johannes Wagner (eds.), *Paschatis Sollemnia. Studien zur Osterfeier und Osterfrömmigkeit. Festschrift J. A. Jungmann zur Vollendung seines 70. Lebensjahres von Schülern u. Freunden dargeboten* Freiburg, (Studies on the Easter Celebration and Piety. A Tribute to J. A. Jungmann for his 70th birthday, presented by pupils and friends), Herder, 1959, pp. 190-191

²⁵² A far-sighted and apt quotation from Alexander Pope's *Essay on Criticism* (1709):

"No place so sacred from such fops is barr'd...
Nay, fly to altars; there they'll talk you dead;
For fools rush in where angels fear to tread".

²⁵³ Except in Eastertide when it is replaced by another equally solemn ceremony, the *Vidi aquam*.

²⁵⁴ P. Guéranger OSB, *The Liturgical Year*, Vol. 6, Dublin: James Duffy, 1886, p. 195

²⁵⁵ Part of the Preface of the Blessing of Palms reads: "For Thee do Thy creatures serve, because they know Thee, their only author and God: and all the things that Thou hast made join in praising Thee; and Thy saints bless Thee, in that they confess with unfaltering voice before kings and powers of this world that great name, the name of Thine only-begotten Son".

²⁵⁶ The values of the modern world are now clearly apparent even in formerly Catholic countries today in the legalization of divorce, contraception, pornography, "gay marriage", euthanasia and abortion. Under the protection of Vatican II's repudiation of the reign of Christ the King over societies, an abortion clinic was opened in Rome during the papacy of Paul VI; he was reportedly upset, but could do nothing to prevent it without contradicting his own teaching on religious liberty and the separation of the Church and State. He can, thus, be said to have presided over the spiritual and corporal destruction of his flock in his own diocese.

²⁵⁷ J-M Vereb, "'Because He Was a German!'" Cardinal Bea and the Origins of Roman Catholic Engagement in the Ecumenical Movement', *Louvain Studies*, 2006, Vol. 33, p. 124. The information was previously provided by Fr Yves Congar from a conversation with Cardinal Bea, as recorded in Congar's *My Journal of the Council* (ed. Denis Minns), Liturgical Press, 2012, p. 73.

²⁵⁸ In this *motu proprio*, Paul VI changed the date of the Feast of Christ the King (set by Pius XI on the Sunday before All Saints Day) to the last Sunday of the ecclesiastical year, with the intention that "the eschatological importance of this Sunday is made clearer". Thus, he gave the faithful to understand that Christ will become King of the Universe only after a long process, that is, at the end of the world.

²⁵⁹ P. Guéranger OSB, *op. cit.*, Vol. 6, p. 195

²⁶⁰ *Apud* N. Giampietro, 'A cinquant'anni dalla riforma liturgica della Settimana Santa', in *Ephemerides Liturgicae*, CXX, 2006, No. 3, July-September, p. 307

²⁶¹ And, by extension, the palm is a symbol of victory against the enemies of the soul in the war waged by the spirit against the flesh – a doctrinal point very much out of favour in the modern liturgy.

²⁶² Nicholas Wiseman, *Four lectures on the offices and ceremonies of Holy Week, as performed in the Papal chapels delivered in Rome in the Lent of MDCCCXXXVII*, London: C. Dolman, 1839, p. 64

²⁶³ St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Part III, Q. 73, Art. 5

²⁶⁴ In Matt. 62-66 we read: "the chief priests and the Pharisees came together to Pilate, saying: Sir, we have remembered that that seducer said, while he was yet alive: After three days I will rise again. Command, therefore, the sepulchre to be guarded until the third day: lest perhaps his disciples come and steal him away, and say to the people: He is risen from the dead; and the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate saith to them: You have a guard; go, guard it as you know...And they, departing, made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting guards".

St. Augustine saw the illogicality of the Jewish lobby and asked: if the guard was awake, how could the theft succeed, and if the guards were asleep, how could they identify the disciples as the thieves?

In this passage, St Matthew brought out with subtle irony the workings of divine Providence regarding the attempts by the Jews to prevent the Resurrection from taking place. For the more precautions they took, humanly speaking, to seal and guard the tomb, the more they confirmed the truth of the Resurrection as a supernatural event to the whole world. And so they were hoist on their own petard, for it was their credibility that was damaged while belief in the Resurrection was strengthened by their very attempts to suppress it.

²⁶⁵ Lest anyone should think that this word is mere hyperbole, it has been chosen advisedly for its etymological roots in the Latin language which links *praeda* (prey) to *praedari* (to plunder). Later the prefix *de* (completely) was added to intensify the meaning and indicate that a thorough job has been done.

²⁶⁶ Fr Frederick McManus, *The Rites of Holy Week: Ceremonies, Preparations, Music, Commentaries*, New Jersey: St Anthony Guild Press, 1956, pp. viii-ix

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. ix.

²⁶⁸ See Chapter 4, Note 16

²⁶⁹ F. McManus, *op. cit.*, p. 32

An option is given for the faithful to sing *Christus vincit* or another hymn.

²⁷⁰ F. McManus, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-8

²⁷¹ *Graduale Romanum: De Ritibus Servandis in Cantu Missae*, Rome, 1908, pp. xiv-xvi. The rubrics referred only to the singing of the Choir and the Cantors; there was no mention of a role for the congregation.

²⁷² Council of Trent, Session 4, 8 April 1546, Decree Concerning the Edition and the Use of the Sacred Books

²⁷³ See *De usu novi Psalterii latini extra horas canonicas* (The use of the new Latin Psalter beyond the Canonical Hours), 22 October 1947, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 39, 1947, p. 508.

²⁷⁴ *Liber Psalmorum* published by the Pontifical Institute of Biblical Studies, Rome, 1945, p. xxvi. *Liturgical Latin: Its Origin and Character*, CUA Press, 1957, p. 60

²⁷⁵ C. Mohrmann, *Liturgical Latin: Its Origin and Character*, CUA Press, 1957, p. 60

²⁷⁶ A. Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy (1948-75)*, p. 27

²⁷⁷ Nicholas Wiseman, *Four lectures on the offices and ceremonies of Holy Week, as performed in the Papal chapels delivered in Rome in the Lent of MDCCCXXXVII*, London: C. Dolman, 1839, p. 145

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 146

²⁷⁹ Cardinal Herbert Vaughan, *A vindication of the Bull Apostolicae curae*, London: Longmans Green, 1898, pp. 42-44

Cardinal Vaughan, Archbishop of Westminster from 1892 to 1903, came from a recusant Catholic family who had suffered persecution in the 17th century for attending Mass, but who persevered in the Faith. He was greatly impressed by the piety of his mother, a convert to Catholicism, who prayed earnestly for religious vocations for her 13 children. 11 of them became priests or nuns; 3 of the priests became bishops; and the remaining 2 children spent some time in a seminary.

²⁸⁰ Before the 1956 reform, the 8th antiphon of the *Mandatum* began as follows: *Benedicta sit Sancta Trinitas atque indivisa Unitas: confitebimur ei, quia fecit nobiscum misericordiam suam*. "Blessed be the Holy and Undivided Trinity: we will give glory to Him because He hath shown His mercy to us". These words were identical to the opening sentence of the Introit of the Holy Trinity.

²⁸¹ For example, *Suscipe Sancta Trinitas* which the priest recites during the Offertory, and *Placeat tibi, Sancta Trinitas* before the final blessing.

²⁸² H. Schmidt SJ (ed.), *Hebdomada Sancta*, 2 vols., Rome: Herder, 1956-57, Vol. 2, p. 775

²⁸³ *Maxima Redemptionis, Instructio*, AAS, 1955, p. 843

²⁸⁴ Yves Congar OP, *Mon Journal du Concile*, Vol. 1, Eric Mahieu, (Editor), Paris: Cerf, 2000, pp. 135-136

²⁸⁵ From a 15 November 2015 letter to the Pontifical Council of the Laity marking the 50th anniversary of Vatican II's Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity.

²⁸⁶ Although the number of candles varied throughout the Middle Ages, the triangular shape of the stand is of ancient origin. Its use during the *Tenebrae* service is mentioned in an *Ordo* (book of ceremonials) of the 7th century published by the historian, Mabillon, which suggests an even earlier usage.

²⁸⁷ Nicholas Wiseman, *Four lectures on the offices and ceremonies of Holy Week*, London: C. Dolman, 1839, p. 7

²⁸⁸ Letter of Cardinal Spellman, 28 January 1956, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York S/C 65 f 9 *apud* Alcuin Reid, *Liturgy in the Twenty-First Century: Contemporary Issues and Perspectives*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016

²⁸⁹ F. McManus, *The Rites of Holy Week: Ceremonies, Preparation, Music, Commentaries*, Paterson, New Jersey: St Anthony Guild Press, 1956, p. 32

²⁹⁰ Two of the most popular are *On Eagles' Wings* and *Were you there?* Both are frequently used at modern Catholic and Protestant services.

²⁹¹ An official sanction used in Roman times to obliterate the identity of a public figure, especially an Emperor, who had fallen out of favour. It consisted in deliberately vandalizing, mutilating or defacing any statues, portraits or coins bearing his likeness so as to eradicate his memory from the collective consciousness of the Roman people. This practice was adopted by modern totalitarian regimes, particularly the Soviet Union.

²⁹² 'Instruction for the Proper Celebration of the Restored Order of Holy Week', November 16, 1955, §8 and §9

²⁹³ Pierre Jounel, 'The New Order of Holy Week', *La Maison-Dieu*, No. 45, 1956, p. 29

²⁹⁴ Nicola Giampietro O.F.M. Cap, *Il Card. Ferdinando Antonelli e gli sviluppi della riforma dal 1948 al 1970* (Card. Fernando Antonelli and the Development of the Liturgical Reform from 1948 to 1970), Rome: Pontificio Ateneo San Anselmo, 1998, p. 59

²⁹⁵ Mgr Léon Gromier, *The "Restored" Holy Week*, A Conference given in Paris in July 1960, published in Fr Ferdinand Portier's magazine, *Opus Dei*, No. 2, April 1962, Paris, pp. 76-90

²⁹⁶ N. Giampietro, 'A cinquant'anni dalla riforma liturgica della Settimana Santa' (Fifty years on from the Liturgical Reform of Holy Week), in *Ephemerides liturgicae*, CXX, 2006, No. 3, July-September, p. 315

²⁹⁷ *La Maison-Dieu*, No. 62, 1960, p. 152

²⁹⁸ Ferdinando Antonelli in Carlo Braga, ed., *La Riforma Liturgica di Pio XII: Documenti*: Vol. I. *La Memoria sulla Riforma Liturgica*, 1948, Rome: Edizioni Liturgiche, 2003, p. 65

²⁹⁹ Michel Andrieu wrote a series of articles called '*Immixtio et consecratio*' which were published in the *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* between 1922 and 1924

³⁰⁰ Fr Antonelli wrote a note in his diary, dated 22 July 1949, to say that the *Memoria* was presented to Pius XII by Cardinal Micara, and that he (Antonelli) was present on that occasion. *Apud* Nicola

Giampietro, *El cardenal Ferdinando Antonelli y la reforma litúrgica*, Ediciones Cristiandad, 2005, p. 42, Note 30

³⁰¹ Jungmann, Capelle and Righetti would become members of the 1960 Central Preparatory Commission for the Liturgy. Capelle died in 1961. In 1964, Jungmann and Righetti were appointed as consultants to Group 10 of the Consilium which was given the job of reforming the Order of Mass. All worked under Bugnini's supervision.

³⁰² A list of attendees is given in *La Maison-Dieu*, No. 37, January 1954, pp. 8-9

³⁰³ The 3 Consultants were required not to speak of their work to anyone else and, on completion of their observations, to return the "Memo" to the Commission. (See *La Memoria sulla Riforma Liturgica*, Supplement II, 1950)

³⁰⁴ B. Capelle, 'Le Vendredi Saint', *La Maison-Dieu*, No. 37, January 1954, p. 93

³⁰⁵ Bugnini mentioned in *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948-1975* that the Consilium eliminated the Offertory prayers and attempted to do the same with the *Oratio Fratres* and the use of incense.

³⁰⁶ B. Capelle, *op. cit.*, p.116

³⁰⁷ F. Antonelli, 'The Liturgical Reform of Holy Week, its Importance, Achievements and Perspectives', *La Maison-Dieu*, No. 47-48, 1956, pp. 229 and 235

³⁰⁸ 'The International Congress of Lugano', *La Maison-Dieu*, No. 37, January 1954, p. 10

³⁰⁹ *La Maison-Dieu*, No. 37, January 1954, p. 125

³¹⁰ *La Maison-Dieu*, No. 37, 1954, p. 3.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10

³¹² *De solemnibus vigiliis paschalis instauranda*, AAS, 1951, pp. 128-137. There is no easily available English translation.

³¹³ *Maxima Redemptionis*, AAS, 1955, pp. 838-847

³¹⁴ Josef Löw, 'We must celebrate the Easter night', *Worship*, March 1953, p. 3

³¹⁵ Josef Löw, *ibid.*, p. 4

³¹⁶ *Das Jahr des Heiles* (The Year of Salvation) was a collection of volumes on the Liturgical Year written by Parsch in the 1920s. It was reprinted several times and translated into various languages.

³¹⁷ Pius Parsch, *The Church's Year of Grace, Volume II: Septuagesima to Holy Saturday*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1962, pp. 337-338

³¹⁸ *Maxima Redemptionis*: "profecto non sine detrimento liturgici sensus, nec sine confusione inter evangélicas narrationes et ad eas pertinentes liturgicas repraesentationes. Solemnis praesertim paschalis vigiliae liturgia, a propria nocturna sede avulsa, nativam perspicuitatem ac verborum et symbolorum sensum amisit". The expression *avulsa* ("snatched away") is offensive and unwarranted, as it has a particularly violent connotation in Latin, being associated with acts of robbery, abduction etc.

³¹⁹ The three aforementioned "expert" Consultants of the Commission were all in favour of holding the Vigil at night, with Capelle being the most adamant about it. *Memoria Sulla Riforma Liturgica*: Supplement II, pp. 21-22.

³²⁰ *Memoria Sulla Riforma Liturgica*, Nos. 73-75

³²¹ Antonelli, *Memoria*, No.75

³²² *Ibid.*, No. 16

³²³ *Apud* Nicola Giampietro, *El cardenal Ferdinando Antonelli y la reforma litúrgica*, Ediciones Cristiandad, 2005, p. 42, Note 30

³²⁴ The Cardinal Archbishop and bishops of the Province of Westminster, *A Vindication of the Bull Apostolicae Curae*, London, 1898, p. 42

³²⁵ The new *Book of Blessings* which replaced the *Rituale Romanum* has largely dispensed with blessing items for use by the faithful. The designated prayers mention blessing the people when they use the item, blessing those who made it or look at it, but not the actual item itself.

³²⁶ A. Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy (1948-75)*, Liturgical Press, 1990, p. 580

³²⁷ A version of this prayer is found in the Old Gelasian Sacramentary of the 8th century. It was only one of several used in the Church at that time for the blessing of the Paschal Candle before the Roman Missal was compiled.

³²⁸ This accusation can be refuted by examining the wording of the prayers. Although *incensum* can mean either “lighted” or “incense”, there was no possible confusion in the original sources. Whereas the 8th century source used the masculine form “*hunc incensum*” for the lighted candle, the pre-1956 Missal used the neuter “*hoc incensum*” which could only mean “incense”.

³²⁹ Equivalent of the modern shell game, it has been part of the con artist’s repertoire at fairs and racecourses since ancient Greek and Roman times.

³³⁰ Lambert Beauduin OSB. ‘*Le cierge pascal*’ (The Paschal Candle), *La Maison-Dieu*, No. 26, March 1951, p. 24

³³¹ *Memoria*, No. 73

³³² L. Beauduin *op. cit.*, p. 24

³³³ Henry Marriot Bannister (ed.), *Missale Gothicum, a Gallican Sacramentary*, London, 1917, p. 67

³³⁴ L. Beauduin, *op. cit.*

³³⁵ Fr Clifford Howell, ‘Understanding the *Exultet*’, *The Way*, London, 1961, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 100

³³⁶ Jean Deshusses (ed.), *Le sacramentaire grégorien, ses principales formes d’après les plus anciens manuscrits: le sacramentaire, le supplément d’Aniane*, Vol. 1, Freiburg, 1971, pp. 183-185

³³⁷ The 8th century Gelasian Sacramentary had 10 readings and 10 corresponding collects; the Byzantine liturgy had 15; the Lateran Basilica had twice as many as it appeared because they were read in both Latin and Greek for the benefit of the Greek-speaking faithful in Rome.

³³⁸ Anton Baumstark, *Nocturna laus. Typen frühchristlicher Vigilienfeier und ihr Fortleben vor allem in römischen und Monastischen Ritus* (Nocturnal Praise. Types of early Christian Vigils and their survival especially in Roman and Monastic rites), Münster: Aschendorff, 1957, pp. 38-39

³³⁹ *Apud* Adrian Fortescue, *Ceremonies of the Roman Rite Described*, p. 327

³⁴⁰ *Summa Theologica*, II, Part II, Q. 91, Art. 2

³⁴¹ Mgr. Léon Gromier, ‘The “Restored” Holy Week’, A Conference given in Paris in July 1960, published in Fr. Ferdinand Portier’s magazine, *Opus Dei*, No. 2, April 1962, Paris, pp. 89-90

³⁴² Ferdinando Antonelli, ‘The Liturgical Reform of Holy Week, its Importance, Achievements and Perspectives’, *La Maison-Dieu*, No. 47-48, July 1956, p. 230

³⁴³ Noël Beda was head of the Theology Faculty in Paris and used Scholastic theology to defend the Faith against the errors of the nascent Protestant Reformation. Erasmus, on the other hand, had little regard for precision in religious matters and held Scholasticism in contempt.

³⁴⁴ The work, entitled *Parafrasi sopra S. Matteo* (Paraphrase on St Matthew’s Gospel), was specifically named in the Index. It was part of a larger volume, *The First Tome or Volume of the Paraphrase of Erasmus upon the Newe Testamente*, printed in London in 1548 by Edward Whitchurch, a publisher of Protestant books promoting the Reformation.

³⁴⁵ Virgil Michel, ‘Baptism Consciousness’, *Orate Fratres* 1 1927, pp. 309-313

³⁴⁶ B. Capelle, *Memoria, Supplemento II – Annotazioni alla “Memoria”*, 1950, pp. 21-22

³⁴⁷ Paul F. Bradshaw, *New SCM Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, SCM Press, 2002, p. 52

³⁴⁸ The 16th century Protestants had refused to recognize Confirmation as a Sacrament, and their followers devised the Renewal of Baptismal Promises for their own “confirmation” ceremony. Vatican II ordered this to be adopted in the Catholic Church. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* stated: “The rite of confirmation is also to be revised in order that the intimate connection of this sacrament with the whole of Christian initiation may stand out more clearly; for this reason it is fitting for candidates to renew their baptismal promises just before they are confirmed”. §71

³⁴⁹ *Memoria sulla riforma liturgica: Supplemento II – Annotazioni alla “Memoria”*, No. 76, 1950, p. 9

³⁵⁰ Godfrey Diekmann, *The Easter Vigil: Arranged for Use in Parishes*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1953, p. 3

³⁵¹ Clifford Howell, *Preparing for Easter*, Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 1957, p. 6

³⁵² They tried to justify their choice of pronoun by a return to the Councils of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381) which issued Creeds using “We believe”. But they failed to distinguish between a historic formulation for catechetical instruction to combat heresy, and its use in a liturgical ceremony; or to take into account that the liturgy of the early Christians used “I believe”.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (§ 167) typically equivocates with a have-it-both-ways “solution” in which no firm guidelines are given: “the Church, our mother...teaches us to say both ‘I believe’ and ‘We believe’”.

³⁵³ Josef Löw, ‘We must celebrate the Easter night’, *Worship*, March 1953, pp. 7, 10, 11

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 15

³⁵⁵ “*studeat parochus fidelibus suadere...ad confessiones...in diversis diebus distributis*”. (The parish priest must advise the faithful coming to Confession [on Holy Saturday evening] to do so on any other days”). Sacred Congregation of Rites, *AAS*, 11 January 1952, p. 52

³⁵⁶ Josef Löw, *ibid.*, p. 5

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 12

³⁵⁹ F. Antonelli, *La Maison-Dieu*, No. 47-48, 1956, p. 238

³⁶⁰ *AAS*, 47, 1955, p. 847

³⁶¹ “*nessuno...sentirà la mancanza delle ‘pianete piegate’*” (no one...will feel the loss of the folded chasuble), in A. Bugnini and C. Braga, *Ordo Hebdomadae Sanctae instauratus commentarium*, Bibliotheca Ephemerides Liturgicae, Sectio Historica 25, Rome: Edizioni Liturgiche, 1956, p. 56, note 28

³⁶² L. Gromier, ‘*La Semaine Sainte Restaurée*’, in *Opus Dei*, No. 2, 1962, p. 80

³⁶³ *AAS*, 52, 26 July 1960, §137, p. 621: “*Planetae plicatae et stola latior amplius non adhibentur*”.

³⁶⁴ This was further confirmed by the contemporary reformer, Fr F. McManus, in his *Ceremonies of Holy Week*, 1956, p. 48, note 4. The suppression applied to the folded chasuble and, by inclusion, the broad stole in both of its traditional colours: violet for penitential days and black for Good Friday.

³⁶⁵ See A. Fortescue, *Ceremonies of the Roman Rite Described*, 1920, p. 254.

³⁶⁶ “*In Allemagna la planeta plicata non si usa più.*” Josef Braun SJ, *I paramenti sacri: loro uso, storia e simbolismo* (Sacred Vestments: their use, history and symbolism), Translation G. Alliod, Torino, Marietti, 1914, p. 96

³⁶⁷ *Apud* Carlo Braga, ed., *La Riforma Liturgica di Pio XII: Documenti: I. La Memoria sulla Riforma Liturgica*, 1948, Rome: Edizioni Liturgiche, 2003, No. 117

³⁶⁸ F. Antonelli, from the Preface to A. Bugnini, *The Simplification of the Rubrics*, trans. L.J. Doyle, Collegeville: Doyle and Finegan, 1955, p. 7

³⁶⁹ *Memoria*, Supplement II, 1950, No. 80, p. 79

³⁷⁰ This was the case, for example, for the Dominicans with the rare exception of those who ran parishes. Nevertheless, minus the blessing of water, the Dominican Rite retained, with minor variations, all the other features of the Pentecost Vigil observed by the traditional Roman Rite.

³⁷¹ A. Fortescue, *Ceremonies of the Roman Rite Described*, 1920, p. 350

³⁷² *Rituale Romanum*, Titulus II, Caput I, p. 27: “*Duo potissimum sacri sunt dies, in quibus solemniter coere monia hoc sacramentum (Baptismatis) administrari convenit: nempe Sabbatum sanctum Paschae et Sabbatum Pentecostes... quem ritum... retineri decet aut certe non omnino praetermitti praecipue in Metropolitanis aut Cathedralibus Ecclesiis*”.

³⁷³ This is explained by Fr Nicholas Gihl, a traditional historian of the Mass, in *The Holy Sacrifice Dogmatically, Liturgically and Ascetically Explained*, Freiburg: Herder, 1902, p. 382.

³⁷⁴ “*La Vigile de la Pentecôte n’a plus rien de baptismal, devenue un jour comme un autre, et faisant mentir le Missel dans le Canon*”.

³⁷⁵ We must distinguish between the “Mass of the Vigil” in the traditional Calendar and the so-called “Vigil Mass” of the *Novus Ordo* which is an “anticipated” Mass of the following day. The (1983) Canon 1248 §1 permits Catholics to miss the Mass of Sundays and Feasts by attending on the previous evening.

³⁷⁶ Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, *Paschale solemnitas: On Preparing and Celebrating the Paschal Feasts*, 16 January 1988, §107

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, §3

³⁷⁸ 1948 *Memoria*, Chapter 1, No. 5

³⁷⁹ The rubrics of the Missal dealt successfully with the problem of “occurrence” (i.e. when two Feasts coincided) in a variety of ways, including commemorating the lower-ranking Feast in the Mass of the day, translating it to the next free day, inserting it into a Local Calendar or celebrating it at a different altar from that of the main Mass.

³⁸⁰ 1948 *Memoria*, No. 7

³⁸¹ In the General Roman Calendar of 1954, the two Octaves were classified respectively as of second and third rank.

³⁸² Although the Octave of the Sacred Heart had only been added in 1929, this was not an innovation but an enhancement of the Feast promoted by successive Popes since its institution in 1765. In fact, the cult of the Sacred Heart long predates that year. As Dom Guéranger observed, there was a custom dating from the early Doctors of the Church and many Saints of regarding the Wound of Jesus’s Side pierced by the lance as “the source of all graces”.

Moreover, to atone for the sins of nations which had violated the rights of Christ in the public sphere, Pius XI ordered that, on the Feast of the Sacred Heart, an Act of Reparation should be made in all the churches of the world.

³⁸³ The 1962 *Saint Andrew Daily Missal*, for example, provides an explanatory note in order to familiarize its readers with the concept of “time per annum”. With reference to the Sundays after the Epiphany and Pentecost, it states that “instead of being arranged to portray the progressive development of the mysteries of Christ, the prayer and teaching of the Church are given for their own sake, independently of any feast or particular occasion”.

³⁸⁴ *Memoria*, Supplement II, 1950, p. 23, No. 76

³⁸⁵ (“*rinunciare corragiosamente all’octava*”), *Memoria*, 1948, §79, p. 79

³⁸⁶ *The Liturgical Year: Paschal Time*, Vol. III, 1868, p. 291

³⁸⁷ “*Sufficiens ratio non datur cur traditionalis octava mutetur in Novenam, quod inauditum est in usibus liturgicis*”.

³⁸⁸ A. Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy*, p. 307, No. 9; p. 319, No. 38

³⁸⁹ A. Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy*, p. 44

³⁹⁰ Guéranger, *ibid.*, pp. 337-447

³⁹¹ Leo I, *Sermo LXXVII*, Chapter 1, ‘*De Pentecoste III*’

³⁹² Mgr Pierre Jounel, whom Bugnini appointed to the *Consilium*, stated that they wanted to scrap Ash Wednesday and have Lent begin on its first Sunday. See ‘*L’Organisation de l’année liturgique*’, *La Maison-Dieu*, No. 100, 1969, pp. 147-148.

³⁹³ L. Bouyer, *Mémoires*, Paris, Editions du Cerf, 2014, pp.199-200. Fr Bouyer did not mention any names, but the Editor of the *Mémoires* (Note 29, pp. 303-304) conjectured that at least one of them was Mgr Pierre Jounel who was in charge of the Temporal Cycle of the Calendar.

³⁹⁴ A. Bugnini, *op.cit.*, p. 319

³⁹⁵ A. Bugnini, *op.cit.*, p. 307, Note 6

³⁹⁶ At least in the Eastern liturgical heritage there was a long-established post-Pentecost week dating back to the early Fathers. This was called an “Afterfeast” instead of an Octave. And the *Apostolic Constitutions* (Book V, Chapter XX), relating to the 3rd and 4th centuries, speaks of a post-Pentecost week of festivities: “Therefore, after you have kept the festival of Pentecost, keep one week more festival”.

³⁹⁷ *General Norms of the Liturgical Calendar*, 1969, (§22, No. 12, Athanasius, *Epistula festalis* 1)

³⁹⁸ *Memoria*, 1948, §79, p. 79

³⁹⁹ This is confirmed by Dom Guéranger in *The Liturgical Year*: “the Pentecost solemnity began on the Vigil, for the neophytes at once put on their white garments: on the eighth day, the Saturday, they laid them aside”.

⁴⁰⁰ Pope Leo I, Sermon 78, *On the Whitsuntide Fast, I*

⁴⁰¹ The minutes of all the meetings which the Commission held from its inception to 1960 when it was absorbed into the Central Preparatory Commission are reproduced as an appendix in N. Glampietro, *Il Card. Ferdinando Antonelli e gli sviluppi della riforma liturgica dal 1948-1970*, Rome, Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, 1998, pp. 278-388

⁴⁰² *Ordo Sabbati Sancti Quando Vigilia Paschalis Instaurata Peragitur*, ‘*De Lectionibus*’, 1956, No. 15

“*Celebrans et ministri, clerus et populus, sedentes auscultant*” (The celebrant and his ministers, the clergy and the people, sit and listen).

⁴⁰³ L. Beauduin, ‘*Messe Basse ou Messe Solennelle?*’, *Les Questions Liturgiques et Paroissiales*, Vol. 5, 1920, p. 90: “une anomalie vraiment regrettable”.

⁴⁰⁴ Although Fr Braga did not become a member of the Commission until 1960, he had been actively assisting Bugnini’s work from the 1950s. In January 1964, he was appointed Undersecretary of the *Consilium* which produced the *Novus Ordo*, working directly under Bugnini.

⁴⁰⁵ C. Braga, ‘*Maxima Redemptionis Nostrae Mysteria: 50 anni dopo (1955-2005)*’, *Ecclesia Orans* (an international journal published by the Pontifical Liturgical Institute of Sant’Anselmo in Rome), No. 23, 2006, p. 18. The article contained the text of a conference given by Fr Braga in 2005 to mark the 50th anniversary of Pius XII’s Holy Week reforms.

⁴⁰⁶ J. B. O’Connell, *Sacred Music and Liturgy*, London: Burns and Oates, 1959, p 13

⁴⁰⁷ In 1943, Pius XII capitulated to the German bishops’ demands and allowed the High Mass (*Deutsches Hochamt*) to be sung in German by the congregation. The congregation sang most of the Mass texts in translation or paraphrase, even though this was strictly against the rubrics and the prescriptions of Canon Law.

- ⁴⁰⁸ A. Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy*, p. 903
- ⁴⁰⁹ Pius X, *Tra le Sollecitudini*, 1903, §13, *Acta Sanctae Sedis*, 36, 1903-1904, p. 329
- ⁴¹⁰ Yves Chiron, *Annibale Bugnini: Reformer of the Liturgy*, Angelico Press, 2018, p. 25
- ⁴¹¹ Piero Marini, *A Challenging Reform: Realizing the Vision of the Liturgical Renewal, 1963-1975*, Liturgical Press, 2007, p. 81
- ⁴¹² Pius X, *Vehementer nos*, 1906, §8
- ⁴¹³ Pius X, *motu proprio*, 1903, §§13, 14
- ⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, § 12.
- ⁴¹⁵ From the beginning of his priestly ministry – as curate in Tombolo, parish priest in Salzano, Bishop of Mantua and Patriarch of Venice – he formed choirs of boys and men, and personally trained them in Gregorian Chant.
- ⁴¹⁶ P. Parsch, *Le renouveau liturgique au service de la paroisse. Sens et portée de la liturgie populaire*, Mulhouse, Salvator, translated from the German *Volksliturgie. Ihr Sinn und Umfang*, (The People's Liturgy. Its Meaning and Scope), Würzburg, 1940, p. 24
- ⁴¹⁷ J. Jungmann, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, Vol. 1, 1951, p. 82
- ⁴¹⁸ J. Jungmann, 'Liturgy of the Eve of the Reformation', *Worship* XXXIII, No. 8, 1958-1959, pp. 508, 514.
- ⁴¹⁹ *Amator Liturgiae* (Pseudonym), 'Letter to the Editor', *American Ecclesiastical Review*, Vol. LXVI, January 1922, p. 67
- ⁴²⁰ J. B. O'Connell, *Sacred Music and Liturgy: The Instruction of the Sacred Congregation of Rites concerning sacred music and sacred liturgy in accordance with the encyclical letters of Pope Pius XII: "Musicae sacrae disciplina" and "Mediator Dei"*, Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1959, p. 46
- ⁴²¹ Other examples of Marxist-inspired revolution in the Church are Liberation Theology, the Worker Priests' Movement and various lay-led organizations such as the Catholic Worker Movement, all connected with liturgical reform.
- ⁴²² The expression "true actors in the liturgy", intended to designate the laity, came from a conference given in 2005 by Fr Carlo Braga, a former member of Pius XII's Liturgy Commission, to mark the 50th anniversary of Pius XII's Holy Week reforms.
- ⁴²³ Fr Bridgett, a convert to Catholicism, was a missionary priest and retreat master who spent most of his life defending the Faith against Protestant prejudices. Among his voluminous writings is *Our Lady's Dowry; or, How England gained and lost that title; a Compilation* (1875) in which he defended medieval devotion to the Blessed Virgin and deftly rebutted all the Protestant charges of "idolatry".
- ⁴²⁴ T. E. Bridgett CSSR, *Ritual of the New Testament: An Essay on the Principles and Origin of Catholic Ritual in Reference to the New Testament*, London, Burns and Oates, 1878, pp. 112-113
- ⁴²⁵ Fr Robert Duggan, 'Good Liturgy: The Assembly', *America Magazine*, with an Introduction by Fr James Martin SJ, 1 March 2004 <https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/475/article/good-liturgy-assembly>
- ⁴²⁶ R. Wiltgen SVD, *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber: The Unknown Council*, New York, Hawthorn Books, 1967, p. 137
- ⁴²⁷ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 2010, §97
- ⁴²⁸ Quote from the Gilbert and Sullivan Opera, *The Gondoliers*, which satirizes the promoters of social equality who "abhor kings...detest rank [and] despise wealth". The Grand Inquisitor, Don Alhambra, an opponent of social levelling, holds that traditional distinctions between rulers and their subjects, between masters and servants, must be maintained for the proper order of society.

⁴²⁹ *Celebrating the Mass: A Pastoral Introduction*, April 2005, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, p. 17

⁴³⁰ The term "Levite" can cause confusion because, whereas all Old Testament priests from the time of Aaron were Levites, not all Levites were priests. It is generally used to identify the part of the tribe of Levi that was appointed for Tabernacle service and to be servants and helpers of the only authorized priests of Israel, the male descendants of Aaron. Both priest and Levite are mentioned in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

⁴³¹ Pope Pius X, *motu proprio*, 1903, (§12)

⁴³² Canon 107 (1917 Code of Canon Law) states: "*Ex divina institutione sunt in Ecclesia clerici a laicis distincti*". (By divine institution there are in the Church clerics distinct from the laity).

⁴³³ F. McManus, *The Rites of Holy Week: Ceremonies, Preparation, Music, Commentaries*, St Anthony Guild Press, Paterson, New Jersey, 1956, p. 32

⁴³⁴ Pius XII was the first Pope to use this phrase. See *De Musica Sacra*, 1958, §31. This document, as we have seen, designates the whole of the Ordinary and the Propers as the "people's parts".

⁴³⁵ Y. Congar, *Je Crois en l'Esprit Saint*, Vol. 3, Paris, Cerf, 1980, p. 305

⁴³⁶ The *General Instruction* states that the dialogue between the priest and the assembled faithful is necessary "in every form of the Mass, so that the action of the whole community may be clearly expressed and fostered". (§35)

⁴³⁷ J. Jungmann SJ, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, Vol. 1, p. 236

⁴³⁸ A. Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948-1975*, Liturgical Press, 1990

⁴³⁹ *Celebrating the Mass: A Pastoral Introduction*, April 2005, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, p. 87

⁴⁴⁰ Dom Prosper Guéranger, *Explanation of the Prayers and Ceremonies of the Holy Mass*, translated from the French by Dom Laurence Shepherd, Monk of the English Benedictine Congregation, St Mary's Abbey, Stanbrook, 1885

⁴⁴¹ Frederick McManus, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34

⁴⁴² A. Bugnini, *op. cit.*, p. 904

⁴⁴³ A. Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948-1975*, translated by Matthew J. O'Connell, Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990, p. 907

⁴⁴⁴ A parallel to the situation of Bugnini and the traditionalists can be seen in Thermopylae (480 B.C.), one of the most famous battles in European ancient history. It was conducted by the Spartan King Leonidas against the Persian invaders under Xerxes who had set out to conquer all of Greece. Although the Persians won that particular battle, the Greeks achieved a **moral** victory through their courageous resistance.

Leonidas went down in history as the hero who fought to the death with little assistance against vastly superior numbers, a tactic that allowed most of his army to retreat and avoid certain doom. The survivors regrouped and fought again at Salamis and at Plataea, where the Persian forces were destroyed. Thus, the self-sacrifice of Leonidas saved Europe from invasion by Asia for hundreds of years.

Both ancient and modern writers have used the Battle of Thermopylae as a symbol of courage, illustrating the patriotism of the contingent which defended its native soil in the face of overwhelming odds – surely a metaphor for traditionalists in their struggle to defend their spiritual patrimony.

⁴⁴⁵ In the new Vatican II structures of collegiality, particular laws are made by the Conference of Bishops at the national level, virtually always rubber-stamped by the Holy See, and imposed on the faithful of each country.

⁴⁴⁶ §22.2 grants an unprecedented degree of control over the liturgy to “various kinds of competent territorial bodies of bishops”.

⁴⁴⁷ A. Bugnini, *op. cit.*, p. 907

⁴⁴⁸ Congregation for Divine Worship, *Concerts in Churches*, 5 November 1987, §6

⁴⁴⁹ As a seminarian, young chaplain, Bishop, Cardinal, Patriarch and Pope, Pius X devoted every stage of his life to promoting Gregorian Chant. In 1911, he founded the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music in Rome for the study and practice of Gregorian Chant and Polyphony to ensure their use for future generations.

⁴⁵⁰ *Musicam Sacram* (§2)

⁴⁵¹ “*Probitas laudatur et alget*” – Virtue is praised then left in the cold – Juvenal, *Satires*, I, line 74

⁴⁵² In Herman Melville’s novel, *Moby Dick*, Captain Ahab’s fanatical and ill-fated quest to destroy the great white whale led to his own destruction and that of all his crew members except one – they were dragged down into Davy Jones’ Locker (a nautical idiom for the bottom of the sea).

⁴⁵³ Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, (The Melian Dialogue), Book 5, Chapter 17



This study provides evidence that the 20th-century Liturgical Movement, inaugurated in 1909 by the Belgian monk Dom Lambert Beauduin, was not of genuine Catholic inspiration but inhabited an altogether different dimension, one that served the "ecumenical" preferences of a certain group of liturgists with radical ideas for reform. Their success in gaining the ear of Pope Pius XII was the precondition for that control-by-committee which would be the hallmark of all future developments in the liturgy. Many will be shocked to discover that these radical reformers were effectively given the power to dictate the reforms on the basis of their own views, which were rife with negative connotations against the traditional liturgy. Using "active participation" of the laity as their rallying cry, they spread the fiction that the faithful had been deprived for centuries of their right to take an active part in the liturgy, and that it was time for them to take back what they had been denied by a "dominant" clergy. By 1956, the stage was set for a paradigm shift in the role of the priest as the basis for a liturgical revolution.

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